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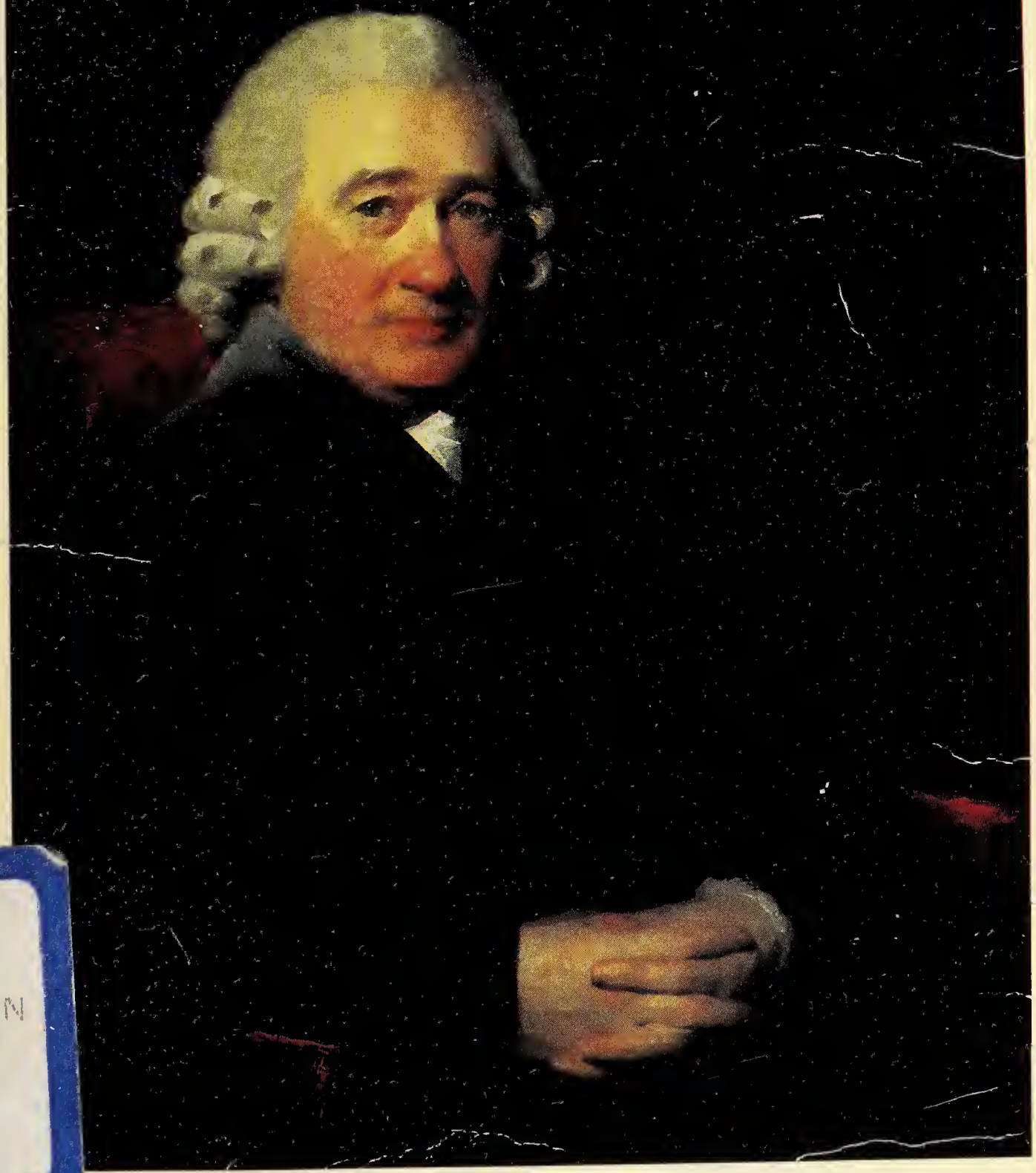
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

WEIR OF HERMISTON



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PENGUIN CLASSICS

WEIR OF HERMISTON

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON was born in Edinburgh in 1850. The son of a prosperous civil engineer, he was expected to follow the family profession but finally was allowed to study law at Edinburgh University. Stevenson reacted violently against the Presbyterian respectability of the city's professional classes and this led to painful clashes with his parents. In his early twenties he became afflicted with a severe respiratory illness from which he was to suffer for the rest of his life. In 1879 he nearly killed himself travelling to California to marry Fanny Osbourne, an American ten years his senior. Together they continued his search for a climate kind to his fragile health, eventually settling in Samoa, where he died on 3 December 1894.

Stevenson's Calvinistic upbringing gave him a preoccupation with predestination and a fascination with the presence of evil. In *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* he explores the darker side of the human psyche, and the character of the Master in *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889) was intended to be 'all I know of the Devil'. Stevenson began his literary career as an essayist and travel-writer, but the success of *Treasure Island* (1883) and *Kidnapped* (1886) established his reputation for tales of action and adventure. *Kidnapped*, and its sequel *Catriona* (1893), *The Master of Ballantrae* and stories such as 'Thrawn Janet' and 'The Merry Men' also reveal his knowledge and feeling for the Scottish cultural past. During the last years of his life Stevenson's creative range developed considerably and *The Beach of Falesá* brought to fiction the kind of scene now associated with Conrad and Maugham. At the time of his death Robert Louis Stevenson was working on *Weir of Hermiston*, at once a romantic historical novel and a reworking of one of Stevenson's own most distressing experiences, the conflict between father and son.

KARL MILLER founded the *London Review of Books*, which he edited for many years. Before this, he was literary editor of the *Spectator* and the *New Statesman* and editor of the *Listener*. He was also, from 1974 to 1992, Lord Northcliffe Professor of Modern English Literature at University College London. His books include *Cockburn's Millennium*, *Doubles*, *Authors* and *Rebecca's Vest*, which was awarded a Scottish Arts Council Book Award and is also available in Penguin.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

WEIR OF HERMISTON

Edited with an Introduction and Notes by
KARL MILLER

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INTRODUCTION

Stevenson's art tended towards a contemplation of his youth and of the Scotland where his youth was spent. There they both are, the Lothian lad and his native land, in this unfinished novel *Weir of Hermiston*, dancing on the pinhead of its point of arrest, which was reached in December 1894, at the early age of 44, after a lifetime of ill-health, courageously endured. The novel, you might say, was interrupted by a 'convulsion of brute nature', which happen to be the words, about a woman's grief and protest, with which the manuscript of 1894 ends. Her sob is 'like the paroxysm of some mortal sickness', and by such a sickness the writer was about to be silenced. The ending is not unlike that of Keats's poem 'Hyperion', which also breaks off at a paroxysm, when Apollo shrieks his apotheosis. And it is not unlike the scenes Stevenson remembered from the first years of his life, when his nurse would console him in his 'paroxysms'.[1] In *Weir of Hermiston* the woman's 'throes of distress' cause him to think of the boyhood of his hero, and he speaks of her in terms of consolation: 'He took the poor child in his arms, and she nestled to his breast as to a mother's . . .'

Stevenson's Scotland begins with the Reformation settlement, and with the Covenanters who sprang from that. The Covenanters were defenders of the Presbyterian faith, refusers of bishops. Theirs was a piety which was also a politics, and which produced a war effort and a state, and a persecution of those who were against them, or not for them. The name was derived from the National Covenant of 1638, which saw the Scots as God's own, a chosen people, and which was followed by the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, whereby the Scots and the English were jointly pledged to a repudiation of episcopacy. When the British monarchy returned in 1660, and when, in

Scotland, as he has it in his fragmentary fiction 'Heathercat', 'the Bishops came in and the dragoons at the heels of them', a blessed remnant of true believers took to the hills, in order to worship in their own way and to listen to their 'outed' ministers: these were the 'hill folk' of the 'killing-time' that ensued.

Hounded by Charles II's dragoons, the Covenanters had themselves been militant and intolerant, and were caught up in a century of revolution, and of reversal and reprisal. 'Seventeenth-centurily', to steal an adverb from the novelist Alan Hollinghurst, persecution was now faced with its own medicine; they became resisters of the state power which they had earlier exercised. It was said of them later, by the Scottish Enlightenment, that they were the fanatics of old. By many other Scots people, though, they were revered. They were the eternal Scotland. And their sufferings and intransigence were well-known to the household in which Stevenson grew up. These ghosts were among the spirits which haunted the household, and he loved them dearly, while aware that there was a dark side to the Covenanters: he claimed to have an ancestor in 'that questionable zealot' John Balfour,[2] an archbishop's assassin and the original of Walter Scott's Balfour of Burley in *Old Mortality*. Nor was he to remain long in ignorance of what it was to be a victim of the ethos which the living legend of the Covenanters had helped to form. They were harsh, and they were harshly treated. They enabled him to deal with a native severity, and with parents who had offended him, and whom he had offended, and with whom he was eventually to be friends again, becoming, once more, ever their affectionate son.

His writing career opened, at the age of 16, with the sorrowful account of a Covenanting defeat in battle, an account which complains that his worthies were being persecuted all over again – subjected, as in the past, to the scorn of a degenerate time; and this last book, *Weir*, opens in the hills on a note of remembrance, with the commemoration of a good man's murder by the sons of Belial. Another late work, 'Heathercat' again, beatifies a conventicle, one of the clandestine services held by the Covenanters out of doors, though it does so with more than a little irony: 'God, who had averted His face from all other countries of the world, still leaned from heaven to

observe, with swelling sympathy, the doings of His moorland remnant.' Just before this, another sophisticated writer, Yeats, had used no irony at all in writing of a similar divine solicitude, of a God who

> lights the stars, His candles,
> And looks upon the poor.

The eighteenth century was a time in which the romancer Stevenson found both coven and Covenant, in which he found witches and warlocks, and the country people who believed in them and who remembered the moorland martyrs, and in which he found Jacobites and Jacobins, and the judges who condemned them. In the course of the later years of the century, the state took possession of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland by means of the ascendancy of the Moderates in its General Assembly. From the point of view of the severe, a blight of laxity had fallen on the land. Remembrance of the Covenant fell away. In the century that followed, however, zeal effected a return. The Wild or Evangelical Party gathered strength in the General Assembly, and in 1843 walked out of the Church of Scotland to bring about what became known as the Disruption and to set up as a separate institution, the Free Kirk. The quarrel was over state intrusion and the issue of lay patronage, involving the appointment of ministers by landowners. The Wild walked out to worship, for a while, in the open air and on the seashore, in the manner of the Covenanters, whose heirs this new generation of outed ministers was proud to be.

In this quarter and in others, it could be said that there were Covenanters abroad in the Scotland inhabited by Stevenson and his parents. The mould had not been broken – and has yet to be. One such man was Thomas Carlyle, who hailed from the old Covenanting heartland of the South-West, who lived in London, as a jewel of the Scottish diaspora, for most of Stevenson's lifetime, and who had lived in Edinburgh at the same time as the shepherd, poet and novelist James Hogg, a friend of the Covenant who was also a critic of antinomian puritanism, with its justified sins. 'Mr Carlyle sees that there is a good deal of rough work in the operations of nature: he seems to think himself bound to consider a good deal of it devilish, after the

old Covenanting fashion . . .' So said Leigh Hunt, a kind of anti-Covenanter, in a teasing sort of way, and Carlyle said of himself, in appropriate style, that 'when in good spirits, I feel as if there were the matter of a very serious Work within me.'[3] Meanwhile Carlyle's wife Jane referred, if only in fun, to a 'spirit of prophecy, inherited' from an ancestor, John Welsh, the Covenanter, who 'married a daughter of John Knox'.[4] In the middle of the last century, to be a Covenanter meant to prophesy and to denounce, to strike blows, to pursue the work within you in a fallen world, to put right the rough work perpetrated by nature, and to confront the Devil. The Covenanter was not mocked in the nineteenth century – except that he sometimes was, and even by those who respected him.

Stevenson's father, Thomas, a lighthouse designer and one of a dynasty of lighthouse designers, was a loyal member of the Church of Scotland, while yielding nothing in point of severity to any outed minister. When Stevenson was seen to lack the religion of his country, to be unwilling to devote himself to lighthouses or the law, or to any other suitable profession, and to be advancing towards a principle of pleasure, father and son fell into the dispute which is commemorated in *Weir of Hermiston*, in the creation of a fictional father with a low opinion of pleasure.

Theirs was a momentous struggle, a very serious work, a killing-time of a kind, and it is not incongruous that its passage into fiction should have required allusion to the annals of Scots religion and of Scots law – the two departments of public life in which a Northern autonomy had persisted. Stevenson's writings on the theme of filial disobedience are the outcome or precipitate of divided feelings which go some way to explaining his view of the 'dual nature' of man, his belief that 'everything is true; only the opposite is true, too; *you must believe both equally or be damned* . . .'[5] At the height of this family quarrel Mr Shiftless Inconsistency – one of his joke self-christenings – wrote to the older woman, Frances Sitwell, whom he loved when he was young: 'I am killing my father . . . If only I could cease to like him, I could pull through with a good heart.'[6] He felt and continued to feel for the father who informed him: 'You have rendered my whole life a failure.' Father and son were a 'half-suited pair', according to a poem

by the son, and their rows were an anguish; even to think of them made the young man's head swim.[7]

Shortly after his father's death he wrote that Thomas Stevenson was a passionate man, 'a man of many extremes, many faults of temper, and no very stable foothold for himself among life's troubles'.[8] It is possible to believe in a hereditary instability, and also to believe that Robert Louis Stevenson may have believed in it: he paid attention to the subject of ancestry, and to the new ideas of the eugenist Francis Galton concerning hereditary genius. But there is no reason to suppose that Thomas Stevenson's son was unstable.

A disobedient son might well dream of his father as a brutal judge who is also a worthy one, a climber of the glorious staircase of his duty, and this is part of the dream that appears in Stevenson's novel. The materials for the undertaking were drawn from the 'jolly scene', as he grimly put it, of the family dispute, from this equivocal Covenanting heritage, and from a study of the Scottish judiciary of the eighteenth century, with the figure of Robert MacQueen, Lord Braxfield, dominating his researches. In order to incorporate his lordship in the story, he consulted a copy of the *Memorials of his Time*, published in 1856, by Henry Cockburn, historian, advocate and Whig politician, and eventually, like Braxfield, one of the Lords of Session in Edinburgh. In that book Cockburn writes of Braxfield with severity and with infinite relish, immortalizing him as he does so.[9]

It was with Cockburn's Braxfield description in mind that Stevenson scanned the rosy, hostile and sardonic features of Raeburn's portrait of the judge. In the essay which discusses the portrait,[10] he relates that Braxfield was told from the dock by one of his culpable political reformers, William Skirving: 'It is altogether unavailing for your lordship to menace me; for I have long learned to fear not the face of man.' Braxfield was 'an inhumane old gentleman', but 'perfectly intrepid', says the essay, defensively and dividedly: too intrepid to have need of the 'heroic words' used here by this Grumbletonian – Braxfield's word for such prisoners. Skirving was a farmer, and a zealot for annual parliaments and universal suffrage; the carefully picked jury, Cockburn remarks in his book about the sedition trials in which Skirving figured, was 'as fit to try this case, as an assize of honest and

frightened Episcopalians, selected by Lauderdale, would have been to try a Covenanter'.[11] Together with 'Bloody' Graham of Claverhouse, 'Bloody' Mackenzie and 'Bloody' Dalyell, the turncoat Earl of Lauderdale was prominent in the Covenanting demonology. Cockburn here plants a resemblance between the puritanical and the Jacobinical. His account deplores both the conduct of the sedition trials and the conception of legality that impelled them; it also trashes – using that very word – Skirving's conduct of his own defence.

Cockburn was opposed to the repressive politics judicially propounded by Braxfield at this anxious time. But he was also a fair-minded man, and a historian of great distinction, whose writings, though often talked of, have been shamefully underrated in his own country. His description of Braxfield starts with the ogre who would have been visible on the bench to the prisoner at the bar: 'Strong built and dark, with rough eyebrows, powerful eyes, threatening lips, and a low growling voice, he was like a formidable blacksmith. His accent and his dialect were exaggerated Scotch; his language, like his thoughts, short, strong, and conclusive.' Cockburn goes on to praise his directness and athleticism in legal argument, and his distinction in the feudal and civil branches of the law. That said, he pronounces sentence:

> With this intellectual force, as applied to law, his merits, I fear, cease. Illiterate and without any taste for refined enjoyment, strength of understanding, which gave him power without cultivation, only encouraged him to a more contemptuous disdain of all natures less coarse than his own. Despising the growing improvement of manners, he shocked the feelings even of an age, which, with more of the formality, had far less of the substance of decorum than our own.

One of Stevenson's biographers, James Pope Hennessy, misreads Cockburn's adjective 'illiterate': Cockburn doesn't mean that the eminent judge could not read or write, but that he was not interested in literature. Stevenson would not have known what the passage went on to say, before the words were removed by Cockburn's first editors, who were both of them sheriffs, and alive to the new decorum: 'Party politics, Scotch law, and obscenity, were the full range of his conversa-

tion, and of his thoughts. Every hour of his life not occupied by professional business was devoted to claret, whist, and less pure enjoyment.' Neither would his editors allow: 'the chief value of the bench to him was as a place for privileged brutality.'[12]

Braxfield's rough tongue, plain speaking, broad Scots and growling, skirling mastodonic Scottishness – it's as if he could have arisen in no other country of the world – have made him a folk hero. Cockburn said that people were still frightened of him, and it's possible, even at this safe remove, to feel fear of the overpowering human specimen, with his diabolical good tunes, conjured up by his account. But there are those since Cockburn who have been fond of him, and who have made the most of his good tunes, and made light of his cruelty. Cockburn relates that a Grumbletonian remarked in court that all great men had been reformers, 'even our Saviour himself'. '"Muckle he made o' that," chuckled Braxfield in an under voice, "he was hanget."' Braxfield had the asperity but not the religion of his compatriots the Covenanters. Black humour went with a black candour, and endowed him with a charm which the Covenanters have often been felt to lack, though Stevenson could come quite close to being charmed by them. It was said that a butler left his employment because of her ladyship's scoldings and was told by her husband: 'Ye've little to complain o': ye may be thankfu' ye're no married to her.' So Braxfield may have had another Braxfield to worry about under his own roof-tree – a wife very different from Weir of Hermiston's. The reformers of the 1790s were not hanget but transported, and when it came to capital punishment Braxfield's bark may have been worse than his bite: but his bite was bad enough, and he was capable of insulting and deriding those to whom he awarded his heavy punishments.

'It's a cursed business, this,' he once conceded, with reference to his profession, while walking with the advocate James Boswell, that seasoned complainer, through the Meadows in Edinburgh. Braxfield's opinion of Boswell is sadly unrecorded, as is his opinion of Boswell's struggle with his father, the judge Lord Auchinleck, which has some claim to be rated a subsidiary source for Stevenson's novel. Braxfield donned Auchinleck's gown, as his successor, when he retired from the

bench, and was a friend of the criminal adventuress Mrs Rudd, foremost of Boswell's many lovers, an interesting London Irishwoman, interested in literature. Boswell's struggle was not known in its fullness until the editions of his journals went into preparation in the 1930s: but it can be inferred from the *Life of Johnson* and has long regaled the inhabitants of his native town. Stevenson was, to use one of his favourite adjectives, a sedulous reader of that book, vowing when he was young that Boswell would be his Bible, and that he'd read daily doses of him till the day he died, and between Boswell's struggle and his own there are definite resemblances. 'If my sons are idiots, can I help it?' The question was put by Lord Auchinleck to his son James – whose mood-swings between elation and despair could be thought to resemble the extremes and instability attributed by Stevenson to his father.[13] Meanwhile Boswell's brother John was sufficiently disturbed to be locked away for long periods. So for dour Lord Auchinleck his sons were idiots, and 'idiot' is Hermiston's favourite term when it comes to reproaching his son Archie.

Stevenson and Cockburn and Boswell were all qualified lawyers, with very different degrees of dedication to the bar, and they were all resisters of their fathers. The first two were family rebels who cared about the city in which they grew up, and about its countryside, as Boswell did not: he was driven by one of his despairs to what are perhaps his hardest words on the subject, noting that 'I felt London little different from Edinburgh, such was my state of insensibility.'[14] Cockburn stuck by the city which Stevenson had more than one reason to quit, but which he never forgot. They loved, and in nearby nooks lived beside, the Pentland Hills, where – as well as in the Borders – the placename Hermiston can be located. And they cared about victims – Cockburn with a demonstrativeness on the subject that might not be expected of a judge who had to hang people and could himself make Braxfieldian jokes. Both cared about the forlorn Charles Cotier of Dunkirk, a Frenchman imprisoned during the Napoleonic wars at Glencorse in the Pentland Hills, where he was shot by a jailor and buried in the kirkyard beneath an inscribed headstone. Stevenson went to this kirk and listened to the sermon of the grave old minister Torrance, who was transferred, by name, to the pages of *Weir of Her-*

miston. He took note of the inscription, and so did Cockburn, who wrote what at one point resembles a *Weir*-shaped poem about Cotier, 'struck by the hand that had promised to save'. Stevenson wrote a prose-poem about the kirk, and may be felt to have written a novel about Cotier – namely *St Ives*, which he had in hand while he was writing *Weir*, and in which a French prisoner-of-war, incarcerated in Edinburgh Castle, escapes to the Pentlands and the drove roads south. There was always to be something French about the adult Robert Louis Stevenson, who, in referring ironically, as he did on one occasion, to 'the sweet land of my ancestors', did so in French.[15] Braxfield hated the French, and hated their revolution.

Cockburn and Stevenson also meet in the matter of another lapidary inscription. They were both, like Archie Weir, members of the Edinburgh University debating club, the Speculative Society, where Mrs Sitwell's letters used to be sent, to avoid Thomas Stevenson's lighthouse eye. Cockburn composed the words, classically restrained, for a tablet in memory of a secretary of the society, William Macbean, who had died young: 'His official services commanded the society's gratitude, his amiableness its affection.' The words might be Dr Johnson's, and were not to Stevenson's taste: 'We would often smile at that ineloquent memorial' – this last word perhaps alluding to the author of the inscription and of the *Memorials* – 'and thought it a poor thing to come into the world at all and have no more behind one than Macbean'. But he felt sorry for the secretary, who is awarded the forlornness which certain of the unfortunate young men of his own fiction succeed in throwing off. The dedication of *Kidnapped* speaks of 'the beloved and inglorious Macbean'.

Cockburn and Stevenson concurred in producing an ambivalent portrait of the same hanging judge, and in being, each in his own way, the victim's friend. Stevenson was, of course, himself a victim. He endured, with buoyancy of spirit, a lifetime of suffering. The thinness of his writing wrist which was noted as he lay in death after his stroke in the South Seas is as expressive as the sore throat which is ascribed in the novel to Duncan Jopp, sentenced to death by Hermiston for an undisclosed crime. If it might be thought that they express, in part, the same thing, the same suffering (sore throats were among his own

ailments), it might also be thought that this is an autobiographical novel undamaged by self-pity. Both in what he was and in what he wrote, Stevenson became a connoisseur of human weakness, and of its transcendence.

These two men are the ancestors of two closely associated English writers of recent times and forbidding temper: Evelyn Waugh, a great-great-grandson of Cockburn's, and Graham Greene, whose grandmother was a cousin of Stevenson's on his mother's side. This would have appealed to the writer who plays, in *Weir of Hermiston*, with the importance of ancestry and with its alleged special importance in Scottish eyes. He refers, sweepingly, to the modern Scot 'of all classes' and claims, in Old Testament vein and with a whiff of the martyr's faggot, that 'there burns alive in him a sense of identity with the dead even to the twentieth generation'. All classes? Here speaks the gentleman gypsy who was never to say goodbye to the upper middle class. 'The power of ancestry on the character,' he adds, 'is not limited to the inheritance of cells' – not limited to the Galtonian dimension: Border women are likely to be as fierce as the men they marry, with the conspicuous exception of poor, weeping, extravagantly tender Mrs Weir. Ancestry, thank goodness, is full of exceptions, complications and generational leaps. 'Like father, like son,' this novel seems to say of Archie, while also saying that he's the opposite of his father and takes after his mother: these male Weirs are half-suited, like Thomas Stevenson and son. Waugh, Greene and Thomas Stevenson were all subject to depressions, but were not related in terms of blood affinity. In the matter of human resemblance, they stand with these Border wives.

To summarize what has been said so far: the religion and the law of his land were used by Stevenson to exhibit the power of its authoritarian fathers, in all the panoply of their obedience to convention – an obedience which could manifest itself in an ugliness of religious bigotry, class-consciousness and sex-hatred. He wrote angrily about some of these ugly things. But with compunction and connection too. Here, as he once phrased it with reference to his own family situation, is an 'infamous temple' into whose walls and buttresses are woven the heart-strings of sons.[16] The power of his compunction is exhibited in

the tenderness which is accorded to his fierce judge, and to those fierce victims, the Covenanters, for whose commemorators, as for his own childhood, the Pentland Hills were holy ground.

About all this anguish, as about very many other matters, he writes superbly in his letters, which have now been redeemed from expurgation, and in one of which, at the age of 23, he makes a joke: 'I have been converted and am going to devote the latter end, or bum, of my life to the confection of savoury tracts . . .'[17] 'Bum' is a word that the no less sprightly and outspoken Cockburn also used in a letter, and 'savoury' was a word used by Covenanting sympathizers. The sentence is that of a man who was both irreverent and obedient, whose words could be judged to need expurgating, but who was always to savour the language of the Covenanting tradition.

*

Stevenson can be compared with Jacob's son Naphtali in the Bible. The name, which was conferred on one of the tribes of Israel, carries the sense of wrestler, and Jacob also says of his son, in Genesis: 'Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words.' Archie's mother says in *Weir* that the Pentlands are like the hills of Naphtali, and *Naphtali* and *A Hind Let Loose* are the titles of two Covenanting narratives, two tales of Scotland's hill folk. Together with his father, at the height of their row, Stevenson wrote a letter to a newspaper on the subject of established churches and signed it 'A Hind Let Loose'. It seems that Stevenson may have felt that, with regard to established churches, this hind was running in two different directions.[18]

His goodly words are sometimes Scottish, and are often at their best when they are Scottish. He is strong when he employs the speech he heard about him when he was young. It's common enough for people, and not least for expatriates, as they grow older and grow conscious of their deaths, to want to return to their early days and to their early words, and this is what the absent and endangered Stevenson wanted to do. His desire for foreign parts, for their own sake, was fully commensurate with his need to expel himself, for medical reasons, from the Caledonian sternness: he was hungry for the Sassenach South and the South Seas, for the Savile Club, America and France,

as a man might be hungry for a foreign wife – like the one he married. But he was also drawn back in spirit to the Pentlands and to the city that sat at their feet. Stevenson's was not in this respect a strange case, but perhaps there's a touch of the anomalous about it. His resort to the Doric, to 'the vernacular', as Lowland Scots speech has frequently been called, was the decision of a man who was both precociously cosmopolitan and a member of the half-Anglicized Scottish upper class, and who grew up to speak the English which Archie Weir speaks in this novel – with some revealing switches into Scots – and which is no less of a vernacular than the Scots which is also spoken there.

Stevenson's eclecticism in the matter of language has its element of complexity and self-division, and it's important to emphasize that his success with Scots does not invalidate his use of English, as chauvinists might tend to assume. His English – for all that it could be considered 'learnt' or acquired – is not deficient, and most of his best-known fictions are largely or entirely in English: *Treasure Island*, well-worded and exquisitely-plotted, *Jekyll and Hyde*, where the fable can admittedly be thought to exceed the language in which it is communicated, and *Kidnapped*, steeped in Scotland but with its Scots words no more than sporadically present in dialogue. *The Ebb-Tide*, a polyglot fathoming of human weakness, full of meaning for Stevenson, and of an under-sense of father-and-son, is all the better for its range of vernaculars, none of them Scottish. Nevertheless, the three works which deserve to be seen as his peak performances are largely or entirely in Scots, or are crucially dependent on it. 'Thrawn Janet', and 'The Tale of Tod Lapraik', which forms a digression in the novel *Catriona*, are in Scots, while *Weir of Hermiston* needs its Scots passages and words, its Braxfield words especially, for all that it's largely in English.

The poems in Scots are a fine performance too. As with the after-dinner verse of Boswell, who wrote well in the speech of which he was ashamed, there's a cleavage between the poems in Scots and the ones in English. The Scots poems have in them the example of Burns, the growls of Braxfield, and the Stevenson of the letters, the charming, caustic, good-hearted, irreverent and obedient Stevenson of the let-

ters. In one such poem he tells Posterity, teasingly, and in order to shut him up ('his mou to steik'):

No bein' fit to write in Greek,
I write in Lallan,
Dear to my heart as the peat reek,
Auld as Tantallon.

But he means it too, this tease, for all that most of his poems are in English. Broad Scots was dear to his heart – in a way which can sometimes remind you of the way in which his Covenanters were dear to his heart. Those, however, who feel that there's a more adult writer apparent in the verse composed in what he calls Lallan (the language of the Scottish Lowlands, which is, as English is, a form of English) might be willing to agree that the appearance is a little deceptive, and that the poems in English should not be thrown into relief, as pale and sentimental, by invidious comparison. Pale and sentimental can be poignantly beautiful in *A Child's Garden of Verses*, in which an adult writer looks back, or down, at an after-dinner scene very different from any of the convivial Boswell's. This is a jolly scene, and yet at moments a sad scene, of night-lights and counterpane, books and toys, with an Edinburgh mirk surrounding the house and staring through the nursery window-pane, a night as black as the Calvinism which fired him and froze him when he was a small sick boy. His beloved nurse 'Cummy', Alison Cunningham, was implicated in that, with her graveyard terrors and her tales of the Covenanters. The saddest note in the collection comes with its promise of pleasure:

The world is so full of a number of things,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

Stevenson told his friend Sidney Colvin in 1893: 'he who can't read Scots can *never* enjoy "Tod Lapraik" . . . "Tod Lapraik" is a piece of living Scots; if I had never writ anything but that and "Thrawn Janet", still I'd have been a writer.'[19] This is certainly correct (but needn't deter the reader furth of Scotland who wants to read Scots and doesn't mind glossaries), and it is unmistakably in earnest. The statement can be linked with the opinion of the wiser sort in the

moorland parish of Balweary – featured in *Weir* and in 'Thrawn Janet' and 'Heathercat' – who profess in 'Thrawn Janet' to be troubled by the absence in their young minister of a living experience of religion. In speaking of a living Scots, Stevenson is speaking the language of those who in earlier times remembered the Covenanters, and were the ancestors of those resented fellow-citizens of his who damned people to hell and attempted to rule their lives. He was in two minds about his country, just as he was about his parents, in the season of their constraints on his adolescence; he was in two minds about the sweet land which turned parents into judges, and judges and priests into bullies; and the language which was spoken by most of its people can be observed, as it appears in his narratives and dialogue and in his poems, to have two faces. It is the language of the native severity and fierceness, of the acceptance of a code of repression, duty and decency, the language of those preoccupied with whatever is scandalous, carnal and of bad report: but it is also a language in which this mentality is criticized. Pleasure is seen as transgressive in Stevenson, who is able to write of the mirth of the damned: he was nevertheless famously in favour of it, while conveying this in a Scots which is also the speech of its detractors, of pleasure-loathers, and of those who take pleasure in pain. There's a poem of his in which a Holy Willie relishes the far from shambling sermon of a judicious Calvinistic minister: the Scots for shambling or shuffling is 'shauchling', and it's interesting in the light of this poem that Hermiston should refer to Archie as his 'shauchling son'. The poem suggests that to shauchle is to be a splairger, a splasher-about, a shillyshallier, in matters of religion – which seem to have mattered more to Hermiston than to Braxfield:

> Nae shauchlin' testimony here –
> We were a' damned, an' that was clear.
> I owned, wi' gratitude an' wonder,
> He was a pleisure to sit under.

Another of his poems speaks of the 'lad that is gone' from within him. To lament the lad's departure is as much, perhaps, as to confess that he has not gone. Stevenson's writings are writings in which, most

unshauchlingly, he talks about himself. To express what he had been, and might still be, and would presently cease to be, to re-live the uncertainties of his past, and to exhibit two men as different from one another as his wholesome Scots first name was from his exotic middle one, as Scots was from English – this is an impulse of his art.

The admirer of his writings in Scots is bound to fasten on one of his most enthralling passages in either tongue. This could be described as the Ballad of Gilbert Elliott, and it is recited in chapter five of *Weir of Hermiston*. Having angered his father with objections to his traffic in capital punishment, Archie has been banished to Hermiston in the Lammermuirs (a setting which has pieces of the Pentlands, as we have seen, and of Upper Tweeddale), where his mother's family come from. Their neighbours include the four Elliott brothers of Cauldstoneslap, and a sister, very desirable Kirstie, whom Archie wastes no time in desiring. Her golden-haired elderly termagant aunt, another Kirstie, is his housekeeper, and in this relationship, too, there is a fondness, an attraction. A tale is told of how the brothers chase a gang of Edinburgh thugs and a local accomplice, who have robbed and mortally beaten their father on his way home to the hills from the market town. These are good Border sons, and the laird is a Border dad who has damaged his assailants. One of the brothers rides his horse over the accomplice and they track the gang through the blood-stained heather as it strikes out onto the drove road, 'hot foot for Edinburgh by the way of the Pentland Hills'. Meanwhile a sixth member of the gang has floated down a tributary stream into the Tweed. The story starts out in English but gains more than tributary contributions, in Scots, from the older Kirstie, who tells it, as Stevenson says, 'like one inspired'. The brothers are chagrined to be joined by a posse of assistant avengers, as they ride on to nab the rest of the gang. Whereupon the sixth shows up:

they were aware of a concourse of people bearing in their midst something that dripped. 'For the boady of the saxt,' pursued Kirstie, 'wi' his head smashed like a hazel-nit, had been a' that nicht in the chairge o' Hermiston Water, and it dunting it on the stanes, and grunding it on the shallows, and flinging the deid thing heels-ower-hurdie at the Fa's o' Spango; and in the first

o' the day Tweed had got a hold o' him and carried him off like a wind, for it was uncoly swalled, and raced wi' him, bobbing under brae-sides, and was long playing with the creature in the drumlie lynns under the castle, and at the hinder end of all cuist him up on the starling of Crossmichael brig.

A simple tale of Border bloodshed, if you like: but Stevenson imparts to it a dimension which brings it into proximity with the folk poetry of the later Middle Ages, and with Titian's depiction of the flaying of Marsyas. Adventure, 'action', is made elemental: what we get is an essential human stuff, moral and physical, the latter and the hinder end, the bum and bits, of the human stuff which has been perceived in Titian's painting. And all this is done by means of a language, a poetry, charged with association and physical in its immediacy, a power and precision of Scots speech, deployed in exile. The Ballad of Gilbert Elliott is a story in its own right, as 'Tod Lapraik' is: but it also appears to have been meant to give structure to the novel as Stevenson had planned it. The brothers would be back for a further affray, a further Border raid. They had performed a feat of filial reparation: it was now to be up to them to set free a mutinous son. *Weir of Hermiston* is a work in which Stevenson himself seeks to perform both of these same feats.

The quarrel with his parents and with Edinburgh respectability was pursued and compounded throughout his writings, which bear many marks of the Stevenson family romance. Here are, in his own language elsewhere in his work, the alternating rebellion and 'just submission' of a disaffected 'loyal son'.[20] Here are, in the language of the title of a story by Proust, the 'filial sentiments of a parricide'. In seeming to hark back to the Covenanters, and to a severity of outlook witnessed, among the respectable, in his early days, his use of Scots can be seen as in some degree loyal, submissive and nostalgic, for all the presence in such stories of pain and of the grotesque, and for all the capacity of his Scots words to mean, at times, the opposite: to express a criticism of Edinburgh, of the city's respectability and severity, a recoil from the cold wind and rain of its morals. The famous 'style' practised in his essays, in the more sedulous and self-consciously imitative of his discursive writings, owes much to the memorial

eloquence of the puritan tradition, to the savoury narratives of Covenanting hagiography, the authorized version of their sufferings, which are present, for that matter, in almost everything he wrote, both in Scots and in English. Like so much else in Stevenson, Style was both for and against the native city whose morals, he felt, made you miserable, for which misery was what life was all about. For Thomas Stevenson, human life was 'a shambling sort of omnibus' – had he said this in Scots, it might have been a shauchling sort of omnibus – which was taking him to his everlasting hotel.[21] His son admired the choice of words – and they are words that not many mere bigots would have used. But he was determined to get off that bus. He wanted to be out of the vale of tears and reproach ordained by both Kirks, both the Free Kirk and his father's Church of Scotland, and to soar from the Sundays of what was later to be called the Edinburgh bourgeoisie on the wings of the gentleman gypsy of the time.

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When his fame came into question, in the usual fashion, during the decades that followed his death, his concern with youth, and with the romance of action and adventure, was held against Stevenson. A member of the *Scrutiny* group declared that, like Walter Scott, he had been overrated. Both writers could be seen, at this time, as juvenile, in the sense of immature, and as romantic, in a period sense of the word that stressed deficiency – and criticism was able to excel itself here by omitting Stevenson and Scott from 'the Scots literary tradition'.[22] The word 'romantic' has had many meanings. During his lifetime and in subsequent decades, it was often to signify departures from home, succeeded by narrow escapes and happy returns. But what we have of *Weir* is hardly an escapist work – though it's true that an eventual escape may have been planned. The *Weir* we have is probable and sombre. This does not mean that it should not be subtitled, as it is, 'An Unfinished Romance': but it does mean that the reader might well wonder what sort of romance is in evidence. Stevenson made little, in his essays, of the topic of romance: but this can't be said of his fictions. Several of these are a *recherche du temps perdu* – a writing large of the romantic topos of the return to childhood, to its scenes and sentiments and sensations. The estrangements and

orphan fates of his youngsters – estrangement may imagine itself an orphan – are a romantic creation with a place in 'the Scots literary tradition' which only a considerable dogmatism would attempt to withhold.

His youngsters stand in a line of descent from the 'mediocre heroes' attributed by the Marxist critic Georg Lukács to the novels of Scott, where they are seen as a registering of historical forces. The mediocrity of Edward Waverley, acknowledged by Scott, can be justified and enjoyed. It enabled Scott to fit together the competing claims of a barbaric and a Hanoverian Scotland, and such heroes can also be credited with the negative capability proper to certain categories of romance. In youth lie both weakness and a kind of strength, that is to say, and that is what Stevenson seems to say: he writes about a submission to experience which is also an ability to 'pull through', as he was always hoping to do at the time of his filial fight, his battle of Heriot Row. Such suggestions are the kind of thing that critics condemn, for being romantic, for being a wishful dream, and it isn't difficult to see what these critics are worried about. But it needn't be thought impossible to see the point, and the truth, of such suggestions. Stevenson himself was both weak and strong. He was a victim who pulled through, who became, in his own strong sense of that word, a writer. He can't be blamed for dying when he did.

I have on my wall a boy's blue picture of *Treasure Island*'s Jim Hawkins hidden in the apple barrel on board ship, eavesdropping forlornly, and yet efficiently, on the pirates' plots. Near by is the sinister shape of the pirate chief Long John Silver – Long John Father, as you might say – with his pistol and his missing leg. Very important are the two big young eyes that lift the lid of the barrel. This is a picture of the strength of weakness. As for Long John Silver, he, too, is in a state of paradox: you can be very active with a missing leg.

The Jim Hawkins of *Kidnapped*, David Balfour, is an orphan snatched from the Lothians and stowed in the hold of the *Covenant*. Down there in the bowels of the brig he has the pre-natal experience of listening to the encroaching noises of a strange new world, and he is soon eavesdropping, like Jim, and to equally good effect, on his captors. David is a 'nice and Covenanting' sort of chap – in other words,

a fussy Whig – according to a Jacobite he falls in with as he goes clambering with the charismatic Alan Breck Stewart, and with a sore throat, across the deserts of the North-West: the Stevenson split – the author's own internal antithesis – is here projected as the difference between a Balfour and a Stewart, a Roundhead and a Cavalier, a Hanoverian practical man and a romantic. Once more, as in *Treasure Island*, a debut is enacted, the start of a new alertness and of an adult self-interest. Each of these novels is a rite of passage, and in that respect not all that different from *Weir*.

The later David Balfour of the sequel to *Kidnapped*, *Catriona*, is more self-interested, and very tough on the self-interest of others, but is still at the mercy of others for much of the book. He is beadier than the earlier Balfour, and at odds with the Stevenson perceptible in the narrator of *Weir of Hermiston*, who may sometimes seem unsound on gender matters, from the point of view of the 'political correctness' of the present day, but who refrains from the later David's frank belief in the inferiority of women. At the same time, the later David can appear to be *like* a woman – or at any rate like the sort of woman whom Catriona has in mind when she makes clear that she'd rather have been a man, and whom David has in mind when he makes clear that women are like children, and suggests, as Sigmund Freud did, that they are less honourable than men. David is in the habit of behaving with the passivity that Catriona doesn't want to display.

There's a chapter in the novel which ends with the words, 'He was as kind to me as any father, yet I ever thought him as false as a cracked bell,' and Stevenson entitles the chapter that comes next 'I am much in the hands of the ladies'. A characteristic transition. *Catriona*, like *Kidnapped*, is written in a trilingual idiom, a shade curious and quaint at times, consisting of English, Scots and the English of Gaelic-speakers. Alluding to one of those orphan's boats that set sail in Stevenson, David remarks: 'This I was had on board of . . .' Quaint, perhaps, and yet equally characteristic. David is for ever being 'had', in all chastity, by ladies, and had, too, by the force of circumstances: 'I was the worst used lad in Christendom.' 'Feckless' is a word which is applied to females by characters in Stevenson: Mrs Weir is called feckless. But so is David, by David, in *Catriona*: 'I make a very feckless

plaything,' he tells one of his ladies. Catriona exclaims of someone else, in her Gaelic English: 'I will never have seen such a feckless creature of a woman.' But her friend David is both feckless and dauntless. Stevenson – who could be thought to be more like a lass than a lad when he was young – wrote at a time when a meeting and muddling of genders had occurred within the literary culture and beyond, and his books are an illustration of that.

So how does this affect Archie Weir? Like David Balfour, he is both weak and strong, both male and female. He was due, according to plan, to be had out of prison by the bold Cauldstoneslap brothers, but he is also capable of standing on his own feet, as he peers from his barrel at the harshness of his father's hegemony. The 'shivering delicacy' of his nature is allied to a replica of Hermiston's obstinacy and hanging face. The paradoxical Stevenson once said of Goethe's influential wet-leg hero, the romantic Werther, who was to his married woman what Stevenson was to his 'madonna' Mrs Sitwell, that 'an idiot like that is hopeless; and yet, he wasn't an idiot'. For Stevenson, Werther was 'a very weak-strong man', and the same is true of Messrs Weir and Balfour.[23] Idiots they aren't. Stevenson wished to speak up both for weakness and for the strength against which weakness must muster its assertion, both for delicacy and tenderness and for the strong, the necessary, brutality which belongs to human affairs and generally goes unsung. In *Weir*, he sings it, or half-sings it, and can think it glorious at times.

Of the two Kirsties in *Weir* one is weak and the other strong, though neither is as weak or as strong as they might initially appear. An ambivalence about fathers went in his work with an ambivalence about females, and with this polarity in *Weir* between the melting and the dynamic, the dark woman and the fair: here again, in a picturing of vulnerability and power, and of their convergence, his human stuff is eloquently displayed. Beyond this lies a further ambivalence. As if in his father's name, and Edinburgh's, he could write sternly about sex. The escapades and mischief in his books are without carnality, and might almost seem intended to preclude it; he calls attention to the adventurous David Balfour's chastity. And in this book Archie Weir arrives 'unspotted' in young Kirstie's arms. At the same time, he

once said that he'd want to try, if he could begin again as a writer, to 'honour Sex more religiously' – in the manner, one might think, of the D. H. Lawrence who came soon after him.[24] The honour here is at a fair distance from the honour that the later David Balfour thought was in men rather than women, and the project would no doubt have embodied the sense that there were women in men and men in women. But he could also suggest, and did suggest in the last words of the 1894 manuscript of *Weir of Hermiston*, that women in particular were ambiguous – a suggestion made somewhat strange by his so often exposing the ambiguity of men. Ambiguity, after all, was his game. The ambiguity he saw in women consists in part of their being both weak and strong, and could be thought continuous with his own ambiguous nature, his own weakness and strength.

His 'steel-straight, blade-true' wife Fanny came to preside over these complexities.[25] 'Feckless' is scarcely the word for Fanny. She was dark, not fair, but can be scented in the older Kirstie (while scarcely missing from the younger one). The older Kirstie 'ran the house with her whole intemperate soul', and 'not without buffets'. Fanny was both tempered and intemperate, as it were. She is evoked, as is the humanity of his ambiguous sexuality, in a letter to J. M. Barrie, creator of that Peter Pan who never grew up, and of Captain Hook, another of the maimed fathers and pirate parents imagined by Late Victorians in the course of reversions to, or perpetuations of, their childhood. Stevenson never outgrew his childhood, but that is not the same as saying, as some have done, that he never grew up; it's better to say of him what he said of himself, and could be said of others – that he partly grew up. Had he written *Jekyll and Hyde* in the language of this husbandly description, it might not have become the household book it has long been, but it might have been an even better one. 'Infinitely little' was Fanny: 'extraordinary wig of gray curls, handsome waxen face like Napoleon's, insane black eyes, boy's hands, tiny bare feet, a cigarette . . . Hellish energy; relieved by fortnights of entire hibernation.' He said too, on the same occasion, in Scots, that she was 'a besom' – a word that means both a broom and a spitfire.[26] In this description the besom is awarded the stature of a child, rather as purposeful Little Dorrit is in the novel by Dickens, and as young

Kirstie is at the end of *Weir*. Kirstie is sobbing and pitiable there – and yet powerful and fearful too.

Stevenson puts Archie Weir in the hands of these ladies, these Kirsties, and his novel encompasses a dream of the strong woman and of the sweet woman, and of a convergence of the twain. His Kirsties do away with the idea that he was some sort of queer fellow whose reticence on the subject of sex was that of a writer who was unable to do justice to heterosexual love, and they are among the reasons why the last sequence of the novel is so moving.

The manuscript of 1894 breaks off at the point at which the writer's life broke off, and at the point at which Archie's love affair reaches a crisis – the sort of crisis from which, in real life, escapes or recoveries can be difficult to achieve. Archie's misgivings about their friendship are experienced by the young Kirstie as a rejection, and there's the feeling that the friendship has ended with the writer's death, as indeed, in a literal sense, it has. Kirstie cries: 'I thocht – I thocht – I thocht I was sae happy!' And Stevenson says that 'the first sob broke from her like the paroxysm of some mortal sickness' – words which, as I've already said, might make one conscious of the writer's mortal sickness, and of his childhood sufferings, when Cummy would 'help console me in my paroxysms'. He then moves to the last paragraph of all, in which the young woman of the bitter remonstrances of a moment before becomes a nestling child who is nevertheless a danger and an 'explosive engine', and in which, once more, he makes you conscious of his death: 'There arose from before him the curtain of boyhood, and he saw for the first time the ambiguous face of woman as she is. In vain he looked back over the interview; he saw not where he had offended.' The outburst seemed to him 'unprovoked, a wilful convulsion of brute nature . . .'

Here, and elsewhere in the novel, as in the beautiful passage where Archie sits in his pew thinking tenderly of 'the flesh on his bones', as of a child 'destined to an early death', *Weir* can be seen as the book of Stevenson's mortality. These passages have the living, breathing quality of some of Keats's last poems, in which an essential human stuff is inseparable from the frail human body.

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'Thrawn Janet' and 'Tod Lapraik' assist the reading of *Weir*, sharing with it as they do a devotion to the Scots tongue and to Scotland's zealot past. The first of these stories is a work of profound feeling and of profound virtuosity. Stevenson could be thought to have done, in his writing life, what is done by the minister (and writer) described in the tale, the Reverend Murdoch Soulis, when he meets up with the Devil in the likeness of a black man: 'Sae doun he sat, and thocht of a' that had come an' gane since he was in Ba'weary, an' his hame, an' the days when he was a bairn an' ran daffin' on the braes . . .' When the minister talks to God he talks in English, as does the writer who introduces the tale – which is told, however, in richest Scots, by a local worthy, who purports to show an enforced submission, on the minister's part, to the superstitions of the countryside, which descend from those of the Covenanters. The minister has shielded his housekeeper from persecution at the hands of credulous villagers: but is she not, after all, a proven witch-wife, sib to the Devil and possessed by the Devil? Like *The Turn of the Screw* by Stevenson's friend Henry James, the story bears a double meaning typical of a time when supernatural events had acquired two faces: such events were customarily presented as subject simultaneously both to belief and to doubt. The 'Thrawn Janet' ghosts can be seen, that's to say, as the phantasms of an inflamed imagination, a folk imagination in this case, or as belonging to a tale of demonic possession, in which the minister is misled by his concern for an afflicted Janet McClour. These two faces might leave you guessing as to whether the writer of the story is or is not an enemy of the Covenanters.

Weir and 'Thrawn Janet' share in the depiction of a lonely male rusticating with a housekeeper, and in *Weir* the elder Kirstie is spoken of by the younger as 'thrawn'. The word can mean twisted or distorted, and it can also mean self-willed or cross; in the second of these senses, one may imagine, Fanny Stevenson could well have been spoken of, from time to time, as thrawn. Meanwhile, in the five chapters of 'Heathercat', the master-and-servant relationship in question suffers a further turn of the screw. We discover there a younger and a pleasure-seeking Janet McClour, daffing and laughing on the braes with the damnable Episcopalian curate who preceded bleak Murdoch

Soulis at Balweary in the valley of Dule. 'A wonderful merry pair, they seemed.' Janet and the curate are as merry as grigs, and as John Knox felt himself to be when he wrote about the murder of a cardinal. Few readers are likely to believe that this younger Janet is in league with the Enemy of Man, though such merriment does not, according to the narrator of another of Stevenson's stories, rule out the possibility.

In Early Modern Scotland, 'merry' and 'bonny' were puritan words for slaughter: 'The work gangs bonnily on,' said a Covenanting minister of an execution of malignants after the defeat of Montrose at Philiphaugh. In Stevenson, 'merry' is a word for the roar made by breakers as they dash themselves against rocks, and for the good times which are to be had by the ungodly, and by which the ungodly may be had, at the cost of their souls. An eruption of joy is witnessed, by the narrator I've just mentioned, in 'Tod Lapraik', a serious work of the superstitious imagination, wonderful for its Scots accent and for its pictorial intensities. The scene is the Bass Rock off the Lothian coast, where Covenanters have been held prisoner and a holy man from the history books is shown performing a miracle of revenge on a reprobate who has been heard to laugh. Tod Lapraik, a weaver, godly and greasy, departs from his ample body to perform feats of aerial wickedness ('out of the body' is a figure of speech, in Stevenson's letters, for rapturous 'satisfactions'). In the likeness of a gull, Tod well-nigh pecks through the rope from which a poor fellow dangles before a cliff face. 'This thing is nae bird,' thinks the poor fellow. Tod then appears on the Rock to execute a wild ecstatic dance. The story says that he is like a lassie leaping about to the sound of the fiddle on a winter's night, and he is like the mini-skirted witch in Burns's 'Tam O' Shanter'. He is having a ball – till he is shot down by a silver bullet. These bad people are as merry as they are mean: 'Nae doubt they burn for it in muckle hell, but they have a grand time here of it, whatever! – and the Lord forgie us!'

This Scottish story conveys the pleasures of severity, but it also conveys that you have to go to the bad if you want to have a good time. The language it contains, like that of 'Thrawn Janet', can sometimes seem self-conscious and nostalgically self-indulgent, but it has a

humour and a power of expression which will be enjoyed for as long as there are those who can read Scots, and the same is true of the Ballad of Gilbert Elliott in *Weir of Hermiston*. The demon gull and the demon dance are masterstrokes – Tod Lapraik's double life and wicked ways deliver a more commanding image than do the delinquencies that come about when Dr Jekyll turns into Mr Hyde; and the insulted remnant of the sixth assailant, in *Weir*, is an image which is no less commanding.

Stevenson's Scots was taken from the speech he heard in the course of his early life, an early life which turned out to be in certain respects his only one. So rich is his Scots that it can appear to form part of the subject-matter of the stories in which it occurs, to form part of the human stuff of their subject-matter. If there's a risk at times of its calling attention to itself, of its seeming to be a tall tongue with which to tell a tall story, it is also fully indigenous and colloquial. One or two of its words can seem as old and rare and inventive as some of Hugh MacDiarmid's Lallans words, but they all belong, as does MacDiarmid's Lallans, to a living Scots. After a business with one of their streams as they go clambering about the heather in *Kidnapped*, Alan Breck Stewart sneers at David Balfour for being 'no very gleg at the jumping'. This word for nimble or alert was unknown to me when I met it long ago as a Scots-speaking boy: Stevenson had enhanced my vocabulary. It may be that the word had not, in fact, died out, and it may be that it has still to do so. That descendant of a Covenanter, Jane Welsh Carlyle, used it of herself. She referred, with every justification, to her 'wonted glegness'.[27]

If Stevenson was seeking his childhood in writing in Scots about Scotland, there have been moments here when I have been seeking mine in writing about Stevenson. I grew up, in the Thirties, at a time when juveniles could feel that they were the creatures of a Stevensonian Scotland, based on that of Walter Scott, which was also an American Scotland, with its wilderness and warring tribes, its puritans, its frontier. Stevenson country was a region in which the thing was to cross streams, camp out on Corrynakiegh, look up at the Pentlands and the Lammermuirs and over at the Bass Rock, a region in which you were surrounded by the surnames of Covenanters,

together with the occasional descendant – such as the eventual Labour MP, Tam Dalyell, tracker of the *Belgrano* – of those who hunted them, in which grown men and women might be heard to talk of the 'hills of home' and 'the graves of the martyrs', in which some of these men and women might be carnally or scandalously disposed, and some of them divided. Twenty years before I was born, a 'Solemn League and Covenant' was signed in Ulster – where the seventeenth century had begun to reappear – in order to avert Irish Home Rule and to save the North from prelates. It was all still going on, and so were Stevenson's words for it. And the recent observance of the centenary of his death has shown that his words, Scots and English, still sound in people's ears, Scots ears and English.

The other day, I launched into a leap on to just the sort of mid-stream rock essayed by David Balfour. I was swallowed by the tumult. As I crawled ashore, I told myself that I was no very gleg at the jumping.

NOTES

1. J. C. Furnas, *Voyage to Windward: The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (1952), p. 28.

2. From the essay 'The Coast of Fife', reprinted in Kenneth Gelder (ed.), *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Scottish Stories and Essays* (1989), p. 264.

3. Hunt's remark, and Carlyle's, are quoted in Simon Heffer, *Moral Desperado: A Life of Thomas Carlyle* (1995), pp. 186, 188.

4. Trudy Bliss (ed.), *Jane Welsh Carlyle: A Selection of her Letters* (paperback 1959), pp. 156, 250.

5. *Voyage to Windward*, p. 353.

6. Quotations that concern Stevenson's relations with his father are taken, unless otherwise attributed, from the chapters on Stevenson in the present writer's life of the historian Henry Cockburn: see *Cockburn's Millennium* (1975), pp. 179–229. This is also the case with quotations that concern Stevenson's connection with Cockburn.

7. Bradford Booth and Ernest Mehew (eds.), *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, vol. 1 (1994), pp. 273, 306–7.

8. Ibid., p. 31.

9. An edition of the *Memorials*, based on one which appeared in 1910, was published in 1974, with an Introduction by the present writer: see pp. 104–8.

10. *Virginibus Puerisque* (Nelson Classics), pp. 218–22. The portrait (reproduced on the cover of this edition) is one of two portraits of the judge by Raeburn.

11. *An Examination of the Trials for Sedition which have hitherto occurred in Scotland*, 2 vols. (1888, reprinted, New York, 1970), vol. 1, pp. 273, 275.

12. Alan Bell (ed.), *Lord Cockburn: A Bicentenary Celebration, 1779–1979* (1979), p. 175.

13. Joseph Reid and Frederick Pottle (eds.), *Boswell: Laird of Auchinleck, 1778–1782* (1993 edn), pp. 389–90, 467.

14. Irma Lustig and Frederick Pottle (eds.), *Boswell: The English Experiment, 1785–1789* (1986), p. 94.

15. *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, vol. 2 (1994), p. 129.

16. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 341.

17. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 326–7.

18. See Genesis 49: 21. The two Covenanting works are *Naphtali* (1667) by Sir James Stewart and James Stirling and *A Hind Let Loose* (1687) by Alexander Shields. For the letter to the press see vol. I, p. 332, of Stevenson's *Letters*. In his Penguin Classics edition of the novel (1979) Paul Binding notes that when Stevenson was in his nursery a favourite poem of his, and of his nurse, by an author with the admired name of the Rev. Robert Murray McCheyne, contained these lines:

> Behind the hills of Naphtali,
> The sun went slowly down,
> Leaving on mountain, tower and tree,
> A tinge of golden brown.

19. Kenneth Gelder quotes this in his excellent Introduction to Stevenson's *Scottish Stories and Essays*, p. 9.

20. See, in particular, the novella 'The Misadventures of John Nicholson', which supplies a further and more literal version of Stevenson's struggle with his father.

21. *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, vol. 2, p. 47.

22. See John Speirs, *The Scots Literary Tradition* (1940). In 1962 there appeared a second edition, with a preface which discusses the treatment given in the book to Scott and Stevenson. Speirs writes (p. 19): 'My omission of Scott was a deliberate critical act.'

23. *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, vol. 1, p. 293.

24. *Voyage to Windward*, p. 362.

25. The description occurs in one of his poems to his wife, which pays tribute to her God-given qualities and in which a 'Great Artificer' takes the place of the Great Invigilator of 'Heathercat'.

26. *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, vol. 1, p. 67.

27. *Jane Welsh Carlyle: A Selection of her Letters*, p. 54.

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NOTE ON THE TEXT

When Robert Louis Stevenson's unfinished novel *Weir of Hermiston* first appeared in print, a year after his death, it was as the instalments of a serialization in the international literary journal *Cosmopolis* (vols. 1 and 2, January to April 1896). Its first appearance in book form, in Britain, came a month later, when it was published by Chatto and Windus in May 1896. His friend Sidney Colvin was editorially responsible for these publications. The present text takes as its point of departure that of an earlier Penguin Classics *Weir*, published in 1979. A number of emendations have been made. Some of these involve repunctuation and the correction of literals. Some take into account, and are in broad agreement with, readings contained in Catherine Kerrigan's edition of the novel, which appeared in 1995, not long before the completion of the present one. Her edition is based on the manuscript of 1894 which was prepared in Samoa, at Stevenson's dictation, by his daughter-in-law, and which was terminated by the writer's sudden death; on the first edition which was derived from it; and on draft material dated 1892. The manuscripts in question are held in American libraries. Two extended passages from the fragmentary material of 1892 are incorporated in her text; one of them represents a continuation of the last chapter beyond the point at which the 1894 manuscript ceases. Both passages are given here in the Notes. In addition, some expressions that belong to the 1894 manuscript and were omitted from Sidney Colvin's version of it are incorporated in this edition. These expressions are among the textual matters which are treated in the Notes. Also worth noting is a reading of Colvin's in chapter one, where 'the womanly falsity' – for the manuscript reading 'the inimitable womanly falsity' – is retained.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to Catherine Kerrigan's edition, and to two other editions, in particular, of *Weir of Hermiston* – Paul Binding's, in *Weir of Hermiston and Other Stories* (Penguin Classics, 1979), and Emma Letley's, in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Weir of Hermiston* (World's Classics, 1987) – and I am grateful to the following people for their advice concerning this one: David Daniell, the Rev. J. C. G. Greig, Patrick Harrison, Douglas Johnson, Kathryn Metzenthin, John Sutherland, Mary and Robert Taubman, Duncan Thomson, Claire Tomalin and Jeremy Treglown.

WEIR OF HERMISTON

TO MY WIFE

I saw rain falling and the rainbow drawn
On Lammermuir. Hearkening I heard again
In my precipitous city beaten bells. And here afar,
Intent on my own race and place, I wrote.
Take thou the writing: thine it is. For who
Burnished the sword, blew on the drowsy coal,
Held still the target higher, chary of praise
And prodigal of counsel[1] *– who but thou?*
So now, in the end, if this the least be good,
If any deed be done, if any fire
Burn in the imperfect page, the praise be thine.

INTRODUCTORY

In the wild end of a moorland parish, far out of the sight of any house, there stands a cairn among the heather, and a little by east of it, in the going down of the brae-side, a monument with some verses half defaced. It was here that Claverhouse shot with his own hand the Praying Weaver of Balweary, and the chisel of Old Mortality has clinked on that lonely gravestone. Public and domestic history have thus marked with a bloody finger this hollow among the hills; and since the Cameronian gave his life there, two hundred years ago, in a glorious folly, and without comprehension or regret, the silence of the moss has been broken once again by the report of firearms and the cry of the dying.

The Deil's Hags was the old name. But the place is now called Francie's Cairn. For a while it was told that Francie walked. Aggie Hogg met him in the gloaming by the cairnside, and he spoke to her, with chattering teeth, so that his words were lost. He pursued Rob Todd (if any one could have believed Robbie) for the space of half a mile with pitiful entreaties. But the age is one of incredulity; these superstitious decorations speedily fell off; and the facts of the story itself, like the bones of a giant buried there and half dug up, survived, naked and imperfect, in the memory of the scattered neighbours. To this day, of winter nights, when the sleet is on the window and the cattle are quiet in the byre, there will be told again, amid the silence of the young and the additions and corrections of the old, the tale of the Justice-Clerk and of his son, young Hermiston, that vanished from men's knowledge; of the Two Kirsties and the Four Black Brothers of the Cauldstaneslap; and of Frank Innes, 'the young fool advocate,' that came into these moorland parts to find his destiny.[1]

CHAPTER I

LIFE AND DEATH OF MRS WEIR

The Lord Justice-Clerk was a stranger in that part of the country; but his lady wife was known there from a child, as her race had been before her. The old 'riding Rutherfords of Hermiston,'[1] of whom she was the last descendant, had been famous men of yore, ill neighbours, ill subjects, and ill husbands to their wives though not their properties. Tales of them were rife for twenty miles about; and their name was even printed in the page of our Scots histories, not always to their credit. One bit the dust at Flodden; one was hanged at his peel door by James the Fifth; another fell dead in a carouse with Tom Dalyell; while a fourth (and that was Jean's own father) died presiding at a Hell-Fire Club, of which he was the founder. There were many heads shaken in Crossmichael at that judgement; the more so as the man had a villainous reputation among high and low, and both with the godly and the worldly. At that very hour of his demise, he had ten going pleas before the Session, eight of them oppressive. And the same doom extended even to his agents; his grieve, that had been his right hand in many a left-hand business, being cast from his horse one night and drowned in a peat-hag on the Kye-skairs; and his very doer (although lawyers have long spoons) surviving him not long, and dying on a sudden in a bloody flux.[2]

In all these generations, while a male Rutherford was in the saddle with his lads, or brawling in a change-house, there would be always a white-faced wife immured at home in the old peel or the later mansion-house. It seemed this succession of martyrs bided long, but took their vengeance in the end, and that was in the person of the last descendant, Jean. She bore the name of the Rutherfords, but she was the daughter of their trembling wives. At the first she was not

wholly without charm. Neighbours recalled in her, as a child, a strain of elfin wilfulness, gentle little mutinies, sad little gaieties, even a morning gleam of beauty that was not to be fulfilled. She withered in the growing, and (whether it was the sins of her sires or the sorrows of her mothers) came to her maturity depressed, and, as it were, defaced; no blood of life in her, no grasp or gaiety; pious, anxious, tender, tearful, and incompetent.

It was a wonder to many that she had married – seeming so wholly of the stuff that makes old maids. But chance cast her in the path of Adam Weir, then the new Lord Advocate,[3] a recognised, risen man, the conqueror of many obstacles, and thus late in the day beginning to think upon a wife. He was one who looked rather to obedience than beauty, yet it would seem he was struck with her at the first look. 'Wha's she?' he said, turning to his host; and, when he had been told, 'Ay,' says he, 'she looks menseful. She minds me –'; and then, after a pause (which some have been daring enough to set down to sentimental recollections), 'Is she releegious?' he asked, and was shortly after, at his own request, presented. The acquaintance, which it seems profane to call a courtship, was pursued with Mr Weir's accustomed industry, and was long a legend, or rather a source of legends, in the Parliament House. He was described coming, rosy with much port, into the drawing-room, walking direct up to the lady, and assailing her with pleasantries, to which the embarrassed fair one responded, in what seemed a kind of agony, 'Eh, Mr Weir!' or 'Oh, Mr Weir!' or 'Keep me,[4] Mr Weir!' On the very eve of their engagement it was related that one had drawn near to the tender couple, and had overheard the lady cry out, with the tones of one who talked for the sake of talking, 'Keep me, Mr Weir, and what became of him?' and the profound accents of the suitor's reply, 'Haangit, mem, haangit.' The motives upon either side were much debated. Mr Weir must have supposed his bride to be somehow suitable; perhaps he belonged to that class of men who think a weak head the ornament of women – an opinion invariably punished in this life. Her descent and her estate were beyond question. Her wayfaring ancestors and her litigious father had done well by Jean. There was ready money and there were broad acres, ready to fall wholly to the husband, to lend dignity to his

descendants, and to himself a title, when he should be called upon the Bench. On the side of Jean, there was perhaps some fascination of curiosity as to this unknown male animal that approached her with the roughness of a ploughman and the *aplomb* of an advocate. Being so trenchantly opposed to all she knew, loved, or understood, he may well have seemed to her the extreme, if scarcely the ideal, of his sex. And besides, he was an ill man to refuse. A little over forty at the period of his marriage, he looked already older, and to the force of manhood added the senatorial dignity of years; it was, perhaps, with an unreverend awe, but he was awful. The Bench, the Bar, and the most experienced and reluctant witness, bowed to his authority – and why not Jeannie Rutherford?

The heresy about foolish women is always punished, I have said, and Lord Hermiston began to pay the penalty at once. His house in George Square was wretchedly ill-guided; nothing answerable to the expense of maintenance but the cellar, which was his own private care. When things went wrong at dinner, as they continually did, my lord would look up the table at his wife: 'I think ye must have given over to the Grumbletonians, Mrs Weir,' he would say. 'I think these broth would be better to sweem in than to sup.' Or else to the butler: 'Here, M'Killop, awa' wi' this Raadical gigot – tak' it to the French, man, and bring me some puddocks![5] It seems rather a sore kind of a business that I should be all day in Court haanging Raadicals, and get nawthing to my denner.' Of course this was but a manner of speaking, and he had never hanged a man for being a Radical in his life; the law, of which he was the faithful minister, directing otherwise. And of course these growls were in the nature of pleasantry, but it was of a recondite sort; and uttered as they were in his resounding voice, and commented on by that expression which they called in the Parliament House 'Hermiston's hanging face' – they struck mere dismay into the wife. She sat before him speechless and fluttering; at each dish, as at a fresh ordeal, her eye hovered toward my lord's countenance and fell again; if he but ate in silence, unspeakable relief was her portion; if there were complaint, the world was darkened. She would seek out the cook, who was always her *sister in the Lord*. 'Oh my dear, this is the most dreidful thing that my lord can never be contented in his own

house!' she would begin; and weep and pray with the cook; and then the cook would pray with Mrs Weir; and the next day's meal would never be a penny the better – and the next cook (when she came) would be worse, if anything, but just as pious. It was often wondered that Lord Hermiston bore it as he did; indeed, he was a stoical old voluptuary, contented with sound wine and plenty of it. But there were moments when he overflowed. Perhaps half a dozen times in the history of his married life – 'Here! tak' it awa', and bring me a piece bread and kebbuck!' he had exclaimed, with an appalling explosion of his voice and one of his rare gestures. None thought to dispute or to make excuses; the service was arrested; Mrs Weir sat at the head of the table whimpering without disguise; and his lordship opposite munched his bread and cheese in ostentatious disregard. Once only Mrs Weir had ventured to appeal. He was passing her chair on his way into the study.

'Oh, Edom!' she wailed, in a voice tragic with tears, and reaching out to him both hands, in one of which she held a sopping pocket-handkerchief.

He paused and looked upon her with a face of wrath, into which there stole, as he looked, a twinkle of humour.

'Noansense!' he said. 'You and your noansense! What do I want with a Christian faim'ly? I want Christian broth! Get me a lass that can plain-boil a potato, if she was a whüre off the streets.' And with these words, which echoed in her tender ears like blasphemy, he had passed on to his study and shut to the door behind him.

Such was the housewifery in George Square. It was better at Hermiston, where Kirstie Elliott, the sister of a neighbouring bonnet-laird, and an eighteenth cousin of the lady's, bore the charge of all, and kept a trim house and a good country table. Kirstie was a woman in a thousand, clean, capable, notable; once a moorland Helen, and still comely as a blood horse and healthy as the hill wind. High in flesh and voice and colour, she ran the house with her whole intemperate soul, in a bustle, not without buffets. Scarce more pious than decency in those days required, she was the cause of many an anxious thought and many a tearful prayer to Mrs Weir. Housekeeper and mistress renewed the parts of Martha and Mary; and though with a pricking

conscience, Mary reposed on Martha's strength as on a rock. Even Lord Hermiston held Kirstie in a particular regard. There were few with whom he unbent so gladly, few whom he favoured with so many pleasantries. 'Kirstie and me maun have our joke,' he would declare, in high good-humour, as he buttered Kirstie's scones and she waited at table. A man who had no need either of love or of popularity, a keen reader of men and of events, there was perhaps only one truth for which he was quite unprepared: he would have been quite unprepared to learn that Kirstie hated him. He thought maid and master were well matched; hard, handy, healthy, broad Scots folk, without a hair of nonsense to the pair of them. And the fact was that she made a goddess and an only child of the effete and tearful lady and even as she waited at table her hands would sometimes itch for my lord's ears.

Thus, at least, when the family were at Hermiston, not only my lord, but Mrs Weir too, enjoyed a holiday. Free from the dreadful looking-for of the miscarried dinner, she would mind her seam, read her piety books, and take her walk (which was my lord's orders), sometimes by herself, sometimes with Archie, the only child of that scarce natural union. The child was her next bond to life. Her frosted sentiment bloomed again, she breathed deep of life, she let loose her heart, in that society. The miracle of her motherhood was ever new to her. The sight of the little man at her skirt intoxicated her with the sense of power, and froze her with the consciousness of her responsibility. She looked forward, and, seeing him in fancy grow up and play his diverse part on the world's theatre, caught in her breath and lifted up her courage with a lively effort. It was only with the child that she forgot herself and was at moments natural; yet it was only with the child that she had conceived and managed to pursue a scheme of conduct. Archie was to be a great man and a good; a minister if possible, a saint for certain. She tried to engage his mind upon her favourite books, Rutherford's *Letters*, Scougal, *Grace Abounding*, and the like.[6] It was a common practice of hers (and strange to remember now) that she would carry the child to the Deil's Hags, sit with him on the Praying Weaver's stone and talk of the Covenanters till their tears ran down. Her view of history was wholly artless, a design in snow and

ink; upon the one side, tender innocents with psalms upon their lips; upon the other, the persecutors, booted, bloody-minded, flushed with wine: a suffering Christ, a raging Beelzebub. *Persecutor* was a word that knocked upon the woman's heart; it was her highest thought of wickedness, and the mark of it was on her house. Her great-great-grandfather had drawn the sword against the Lord's anointed on the field of Rullion Green, and breathed his last (tradition said) in the arms of the detestable Dalyell. Nor could she blind herself to this, that had they lived in those old days, Hermiston himself would have been numbered alongside of Bloody Mackenzie and the politic Lauderdale and Rothes, in the band of God's immediate enemies.[7] The sense of this moved her to the more fervour; she had a voice for that name of *persecutor* that thrilled in the child's marrow; and when one day the mob hooted and hissed them all in my lord's travelling carriage, and cried, 'Down with the persecutor! down with Hanging Hermiston!' and mamma covered her eyes and wept, and papa let down the glass and looked out upon the rabble with his droll formidable face, bitter and smiling, as they said he sometimes looked when he gave sentence, Archie was for the moment too much amazed to be alarmed, but he had scarce got his mother by herself before his shrill voice was raised demanding an explanation: Why had they called papa a persecutor?

'Keep me, my precious!' she exclaimed. 'Keep me, my dear! this is poleetical. Ye must never ask me anything poleetical, Erchie. Your faither is a great man, my dear, and it's no for me or you to be judging him. It would be telling us all, if we behaved ourselves in our several stations the way your faither does in his high office; and let me hear no more of any such disrespectful and undutiful questions! No that you meant to be undutiful, my lamb; your mother kens that – she kens it well, dearie!' And so slid off to safer topics, and left on the mind of the child an obscure but ineradicable sense of something wrong.

Mrs Weir's philosophy of life was summed in one expression – tenderness. In her view of the universe, which was all lighted up with a glow out of the doors of hell, good people must walk there in a kind of ecstasy of tenderness. The beasts and plants had no souls; they

were here but for a day, and let their day pass gently! And as for the immortal men, on what black, downward path were many of them wending, and to what a horror of an immortality! 'Are not two sparrows,' 'Whosoever shall smite thee,' 'God sendeth His rain,' 'Judge not that ye be not judged' – these texts made her body of divinity; she put them on in the morning with her clothes and lay down to sleep with them at night; they haunted her like a favourite air, they clung about her like a favourite perfume. Their minister was a marrowy[8] expounder of the law, and my lord sat under him with relish; but Mrs Weir respected him from afar off; heard him (like the cannon of a beleaguered city) usefully booming outside on the dogmatic ramparts; and meanwhile, within and out of shot, dwelt in her private garden, which she watered with grateful tears. It seems strange to say of this colourless and ineffectual woman, but she was a true enthusiast, and might have made the sunshine and the glory of a cloister. Perhaps none but Archie knew she could be eloquent; perhaps none but he had seen her – her colour raised, her hands clasped or quivering – glow with gentle ardour. There is a corner of the policy of Hermiston, where you come suddenly in view of the summit of Black Fell, sometimes like the mere grass top of a hill, sometimes (and this is her own expression) like a precious jewel in the heavens. On such days, upon the sudden view of it, her hand would tighten on the child's fingers, her voice rise like a song. 'I to the hills!' she would repeat. 'And oh, Erchie, arena these like the hills of Naphtali?'[9] and her easy tears would flow.

Upon an impressionable child the effect of this continual and pretty accompaniment to life was deep. The woman's quietism and piety passed on to his different nature undiminished; but whereas in her it was a native sentiment, in him it was only an implanted dogma. Nature and the child's pugnacity at times revolted. A cad from the Potterrow once struck him in the mouth; he struck back, the pair fought it out in the back stable lane towards the Meadows, and Archie returned with a considerable decline in the number of his front teeth, and unregenerately boasting of the losses of the foe. It was a sore day for Mrs Weir; she wept and prayed over the infant backslider until my lord was due from Court, and she must resume

that air of tremulous composure with which she always greeted him. The judge was that day in an observant mood, and remarked upon the absent teeth.

'I am afraid Erchie will have been fechting with some of they blag-yard lads,' said Mrs Weir.

My lord's voice rang out as it did seldom in the privacy of his own house. 'I'll have nonn of that, sir!' he cried. 'Do you hear me? – nonn of that! No son of mine shall be speldering in the glaur with any dirty raibble.'

The anxious mother was grateful for so much support; she had even feared the contrary. And that night when she put the child to bed – 'Now, my dear, ye see!' she said, 'I told you what your faither would think of it, if he heard ye had fallen into this dreidful sin; and let you and me pray to God that ye may be keepit from the like temptation or stren'thened to resist it!'

The womanly falsity of this was thrown away. Ice and iron cannot be welded; and the points of view of the Justice-Clerk and Mrs Weir were not less unassimilable. The character and position of his father had long been a stumbling-block to Archie, and with every year of his age the difficulty grew more instant. The man was mostly silent; when he spoke at all, it was to speak of the things of the world, always in a worldly spirit, often in language that the child had been schooled to think coarse, and sometimes with words that he knew to be sins in themselves. Tenderness was the first duty, and my lord was invariably harsh. God was love; the name of my lord (to all who knew him) was fear. In the world, as schematised for Archie by his mother, the place was marked for such a creature. There were some whom it was good to pity and well (though very likely useless) to pray for; they were named reprobates, goats, God's enemies, brands for the burning; and Archie tallied every mark of identification, and drew the inevitable private inference that the Lord Justice-Clerk was the chief of sinners.[10]

The mother's honesty was scarce complete. There was one influence she feared for the child and still secretly combated; that was my lord's; and half unconsciously, half in a wilful blindness, she continued to undermine her husband with his son. As long as Archie

remained silent, she did so ruthlessly, with a single eye to heaven and the child's salvation; but the day came when Archie spoke. It was 1801, and Archie was seven, and beyond his years for curiosity and logic, when he brought the case up openly. If judging were sinful and forbidden, how came papa to be a judge? to have that sin for a trade? to bear the name of it for a distinction?

'I can't see it,' said the little Rabbi, and wagged his head.

Mrs Weir abounded in commonplace replies.

'No, I canna see it,' reiterated Archie. 'And I'll tell you what, mamma, I don't think you and me's justifeed in staying with him.'

The woman awoke to remorse; she saw herself disloyal to her man, her sovereign and bread-winner, in whom (with what she had of worldliness) she took a certain subdued pride. She expatiated in reply on my lord's honour and greatness; his useful services in this world of sorrow and wrong, and the place in which he stood, far above where babes and innocents could hope to see or criticise. But she had builded too well – Archie had his answers pat: Were not babes and innocents the type of the kingdom of heaven? Were not honour and greatness the badges of the world? And at any rate, how about the mob that had once seethed about the carriage?

'It's all very fine,' he concluded, 'but in my opinion, papa has no right to be it. And it seems that's not the worst yet of it. It seems he's called "the Hanging Judge"[11] – it seems he's crooool. I'll tell you what it is, mamma, there's a tex' borne in upon me: It were better for that man if a milestone[12] were bound upon his back and him flung into the deepestmost pairts of the sea.'

'Oh my lamb, ye must never say the like of that!' she cried. 'Ye're to honour faither and mother, dear, that your days may be long in the land. It's Atheists that cry out against him – French Atheists, Erchie! Ye would never surely even yourself down to be saying the same thing as French Atheists? It would break my heart to think that of you. And oh, Erchie, here arena *you* setting up to *judge*? And have ye no forgot God's plain command – the First with Promise, dear? Mind you upon the beam and the mote!'[13]

Having thus carried the war into the enemy's camp, the terrified lady breathed again. And no doubt it is easy thus to circumvent a

child with catchwords, but it may be questioned how far it is effectual. An instinct in his breast detects the quibble, and a voice condemns it. He will instantly submit, privately hold the same opinion. For even in this simple and antique relation of the mother and the child, hypocrisies are multiplied.

When the Court rose that year and the family returned to Hermiston, it was a common remark in all the country that the lady was sore failed. She seemed to lose and seize again her touch with life, now sitting inert in a sort of durable bewilderment, anon waking to feverish and weak activity. She dawdled about the lassies at their work, looking stupidly on; she fell to rummaging in old cabinets and presses, and desisted when half through; she would begin remarks with an air of animation and drop them without a struggle. Her common appearance was of one who has forgotten something and is trying to remember; and when she overhauled, one after another, the worthless and touching mementoes of her youth, she might have been seeking the clue to that lost thought. During this period she gave many gifts to the neighbours and house lassies, giving them with a manner of regret that embarrassed the recipients.

The last night of all she was busy on some female work, and toiled upon it with so manifest and painful a devotion that my lord (who was not often curious) inquired as to its nature.

She blushed to the eyes. 'Oh, Edom, it's for you!' she said. 'It's slippers. I – I hae never made ye any.'

'Ye daft auld wife!' returned his lordship. 'A bonny figure I would be, palmering about in bauchles!'

The next day, at the hour of her walk, Kirstie interfered. Kirstie took this decay of her mistress very hard; bore her a grudge, quarrelled with and railed upon her, the anxiety of a genuine love wearing the disguise of temper. This day of all days she insisted disrespectfully, with rustic fury, that Mrs Weir should stay at home. But, 'No, no,' she said, 'it's my lord's orders,' and set forth as usual. Archie was visible in the acre bog, engaged upon some childish enterprise, the instrument of which was mire; and she stood and looked at him a while like one about to call; then thought otherwise, sighed, and shook her head, and proceeded on her rounds alone. The house lassies were at the

burn-side washing, and saw her pass with her loose, weary, dowdy gait.

'She's a terrible feckless wife, the mistress!' said the one.

'Tut,' said the other, 'the wumman's seeck.'

'Weel, I canna see nae differ in her,' returned the first. 'A fûshionless quean, a feckless carline.'

The poor creature thus discussed rambled a while in the grounds without a purpose. Tides in her mind ebbed and flowed, and carried her to and fro like seaweed. She tried a path, paused, returned, and tried another; questing, forgetting her quest; the spirit of choice extinct in her bosom, or devoid of sequency. On a sudden, it appeared as though she had remembered, or had formed a resolution, wheeled about, returned with hurried steps, and appeared in the dining-room, where Kirstie was at the cleaning, like one charged with an important errand.

'Kirstie!' she began, and paused; and then with conviction, 'Mr Weir isna speeritually minded, but he has been a good man to me.'

It was perhaps the first time since her husband's elevation that she had forgotten the handle to his name, of which the tender, inconsistent woman was not a little proud. And when Kirstie looked up at the speaker's face, she was aware of a change.

'Godsake, what's the maitter wi' ye, mem?' cried the housekeeper, starting from the rug.

'I do not ken,' answered her mistress, shaking her head. 'But he is not speeritually minded, my dear.'

'Here, sit down with ye! Godsake, what ails the wife?' cried Kirstie, and helped and forced her into my lord's own chair by the cheek of the hearth.

'Keep me, what's this?' she gasped. 'Kirstie, what's this? I'm frich'ened.'

They were her last words.

It was the lowering nightfall when my lord returned. He had the sunset in his back, all clouds and glory; and before him, by the wayside, spied Kirstie Elliott waiting. She was dissolved in tears, and addressed him in the high, false note of barbarous mourning, such as still lingers modified among Scots heather.

'The Lord peety ye, Hermiston! the Lord prepare ye!' she keened out. 'Weary upon me, that I should have to tell it!'

He reined in his horse and looked upon her with the hanging face.

'Has the French landit?' cried he.

'Man, man,' she said, 'is that a' ye can think of? The Lord prepare ye, the Lord comfort and support ye!'

'Is onybody deid?' says his lordship. 'It's no Erchie?'

'Bethankit, no!' exclaimed the woman, startled into a more natural tone. 'Na, na, it's no sae bad as that. It's the mistress, my lord; she just fair flittit before my e'en. She just gi'ed a sab and was by wi' it. Eh, my bonny Miss Jeannie, that I mind sae weel!' And forth again upon that pouring tide of lamentation in which women of her class excel and over-abound.

Lord Hermiston sat in the saddle, beholding her. Then he seemed to recover command upon himself.

'Weel, it's something of the suddenest,' said he. 'But she was a dwaibly body from the first.'

And he rode home at a precipitate amble with Kirstie at his horse's heels.

Dressed as she was for her last walk, they had laid the dead lady on her bed. She was never interesting in life; in death she was not impressive; and as her husband stood before her, with his hands crossed behind his powerful back, that which he looked upon was the very image of the insignificant.

'Her and me were never cut out for one another,' he remarked at last. 'It was a daft-like marriage.' And then, with a most unusual gentleness of tone, 'Puir bitch,' said he, 'puir bitch!'[14] Then suddenly: 'Where's Erchie?'

Kirstie had decoyed him to her room and given him 'a jeely-piece.'

'Ye have some kind of gumption, too,' observed the Judge, and considered his housekeeper grimly. 'When all's said,' he added, 'I micht have done waur – I micht have been marriet upon a skirling Jezebel like you!'

'There's naebody thinking of you, Hermiston!' cried the offended woman. 'We think of her that's out of her sorrows. And could *she*

have done waur? Tell me that, Hermiston – tell me that before her clay-cauld corp!'

'Weel, there's some of them gey an' ill to please,'[15] observed his lordship.

CHAPTER II

FATHER AND SON

My Lord Justice-Clerk was known to many; the man Adam Weir perhaps to none. He had nothing to explain or to conceal; he sufficed wholly and silently to himself; and that part of our nature which goes out (too often with false coin) to acquire glory or love, seemed in him to be omitted. He did not try to be loved, he did not care to be; it is probable the very thought of it was a stranger to his mind. He was an admired lawyer, a highly unpopular judge; and he looked down upon those who were his inferiors in either distinction, who were lawyers of less grasp or judges not so much detested. In all the rest of his days and doings, not one trace of vanity appeared; and he went on through life with a mechanical movement, as of the unconscious, that was almost august.

He saw little of his son. In the childish maladies with which the boy was troubled, he would make daily inquiries and daily pay him a visit, entering the sick-room with a facetious and appalling countenance, letting off a few perfunctory jests, and going again swiftly, to the patient's relief. Once, a Court holiday falling opportunely, my lord had his carriage, and drove the child himself to Hermiston, the customary place of convalescence. It is conceivable he had been more than usually anxious, for that journey always remained in Archie's memory as a thing apart, his father having related to him from beginning to end, and with much detail, three authentic murder cases. Archie went the usual round of other Edinburgh boys, the High School and the College; and Hermiston looked on, or rather looked away, with scarce an affectation of interest in his progress. Daily, indeed, upon a signal after dinner, he was brought in, given nuts and a glass of port, regarded sardonically, sarcastically questioned. 'Well, sir,

and what have you donn with your book to-day?' my lord might begin, and set him posers in law Latin. To a child just stumbling into Corderius, Papinian and Paul[1] proved quite invincible. But papa had memory of no other. He was not harsh to the little scholar, having a vast fund of patience learned upon the Bench, and was at no pains whether to conceal or to express his disappointment. 'Well, ye have a long jaunt before ye yet!' he might observe, yawning, and fall back on his own thoughts (as like as not) until the time came for separation, and my lord would take the decanter and the glass, and be off to the back chamber looking on the Meadows, where he toiled on his cases till the hours were small. There was no 'fuller man' on the Bench; his memory was marvellous, though wholly legal; if he had to 'advise' extempore, none did it better; yet there was none who more earnestly prepared. As he thus watched in the night, or sat at table and forgot the presence of his son, no doubt but he tasted deeply of recondite pleasures. To be wholly devoted to some intellectual exercise is to have succeeded in life; and perhaps only in law and the higher mathematics may this devotion be maintained, suffice to itself without reaction, and find continual rewards without excitement. This atmosphere of his father's sterling industry was the best of Archie's education. Assuredly it did not attract him; assuredly it rather rebutted and depressed. Yet it was still present, unobserved like the ticking of a clock, an arid ideal, a tasteless stimulant in the boy's life.

But Hermiston was not all of one piece. He was, besides, a mighty toper; he could sit at wine until the day dawned, and pass directly from the table to the Bench with a steady hand and a clear head. Beyond the third bottle, he showed the plebeian in a larger print; the low, gross accent, the low, foul mirth, grew broader and commoner; he became less formidable, and infinitely more disgusting. Now, the boy had inherited from Jean Rutherford a shivering delicacy, unequally mated with potential violence. In the playing-fields, and amongst his own companions, he repaid a coarse expression with a blow; at his father's table (when the time came for him to join these revels) he turned pale and sickened in silence. Of all the guests whom he there encountered, he had toleration for only one: David Keith Carnegie, Lord Glenalmond. Lord Glenalmond was tall and emaciated, with

long features and long delicate hands. He was often compared with the statue of Forbes of Culloden[2] in the Parliament House; and his blue eye, at more than sixty, preserved some of the fire of youth. His exquisite disparity with any of his fellow-guests, his appearance as of an artist and an aristocrat stranded in rude company, riveted the boy's attention; and as curiosity and interest are the things in the world that are the most immediately and certainly rewarded, Lord Glenalmond was attracted to the boy.

'And so this is your son, Hermiston?' he asked, laying his hand on Archie's shoulder. 'He's getting a big lad.'

'Hoot!' said the gracious father, 'just his mother over again – daurna say boo to a goose!'

But the stranger retained the boy, talked to him, drew him out, found in him a taste for letters, and a fine, ardent, modest, youthful soul; and encouraged him to be a visitor on Sunday evenings in his bare, cold, lonely dining-room, where he sat and read in the isolation of a bachelor grown old in refinement. The beautiful gentleness and grace of the old Judge, and the delicacy of his person, thoughts, and language, spoke to Archie's heart in its own tongue. He conceived the ambition to be such another; and, when the day came for him to choose a profession, it was in emulation of Lord Glenalmond, not of Lord Hermiston, that he chose the Bar. Hermiston looked on at this friendship with some secret pride, but openly with the intolerance of scorn. He scarce lost an opportunity to put them down with a rough jape; and, to say truth, it was not difficult, for they were neither of them quick. He had a word of contempt for the whole crowd of poets, painters, fiddlers, and their admirers, the bastard race of amateurs, which was continually on his lips. 'Signor Feedle-eerie!' he would say. 'Oh, for Goad's sake, no more of the Signor!'

'You and my father are great friends, are you not?' asked Archie once.

'There is no man that I more respect, Archie,' replied Lord Glenalmond. 'He is two things of price. He is a great lawyer, and he is upright as the day.'

'You and he are so different,' said the boy, his eyes dwelling on those of his old friend, like a lover's on his mistress's.

'Indeed so,' replied the Judge; 'very different. And so I fear are you and he. Yet I would like it very ill if my young friend were to misjudge his father. He has all the Roman virtues: Cato and Brutus[3] were such; I think a son's heart might well be proud of such an ancestry of one.'

'And I would sooner he were a plaided herd,' cried Archie, with sudden bitterness.

'And that is neither very wise, nor I believe entirely true,' returned Glenalmond. 'Before you are done you will find some of these expressions rise on you like a remorse. They are merely literary and decorative; they do not aptly express your thought, nor is your thought clearly apprehended, and no doubt your father (if he were here) would say "Signor Feedle-eerie!" '

With the infinitely delicate sense of youth, Archie avoided the subject from that hour. It was perhaps a pity. Had he but talked – talked freely – let himself gush out in words (the way youth loves to do and should), there might have been no tale to write upon the Weirs of Hermiston. But the shadow of a threat of ridicule sufficed; in the slight tartness of these words he read a prohibition; and it is likely that Glenalmond meant it so.

Besides the veteran, the boy was without confidant or friend. Serious and eager, he came through school and college, and moved among a crowd of the indifferent, in the seclusion of his shyness. He grew up handsome, with an open, speaking countenance, with graceful, youthful ways; he was clever, he took prizes, he shone in the Speculative Society.[4] It should seem he must become the centre of a crowd of friends; but something that was in part the delicacy of his mother, in part the austerity of his father, held him aloof from all. It is a fact, and a strange one, that among his contemporaries Hermiston's son was thought to be a chip of the old block. 'You're a friend of Archie Weir's?' said one to Frank Innes; and Innes replied, with his usual flippancy and more than his usual insight: 'I know Weir, but I never met Archie.' No one had met Archie, a malady most incident to only sons. He flew his private signal, and none heeded it; it seemed he was abroad in a world from which the very hope of intimacy was banished; and he looked round about him on the concourse of his

fellow-students, and forward to the trivial days and acquaintances that were to come, without hope or interest.

As time went on, the tough and rough old sinner felt himself drawn to the son of his loins and sole continuator of his new family, with softnesses of sentiment that he could hardly credit and was wholly impotent to express. With a face, voice, and manner trained through forty years to terrify and repel, Rhadamanthus[5] may be great, but he will scarce be engaging. It is a fact that he tried to propitiate Archie, but a fact that cannot be too lightly taken; the attempt was so unconspicuously made, the failure so stoically supported. Sympathy is not due to these steadfast iron natures. If he failed to gain his son's friendship, or even his son's toleration, on he went up the great, bare staircase of his duty, uncheered and undepressed. There might have been more pleasure in his relations with Archie, so much he may have recognised at moments; but pleasure was a by-product of the singular chemistry of life, which only fools expected.

An idea of Archie's attitude, since we are all grown up and have forgotten the days of our youth, it is more difficult to convey. He made no attempt whatsoever to understand the man with whom he dined and breakfasted. Parsimony of pain, glut of pleasure, these are the two alternating ends of youth; and Archie was of the parsimonious. The wind blew cold out of a certain quarter – he turned his back upon it; stayed as little as was possible in his father's presence; and when there, averted his eyes as much as was decent from his father's face. The lamp shone for many hundred days upon these two at table – my lord ruddy, gloomy, and unreverent; Archie with a potential brightness that was always dimmed and veiled in that society; and there were not, perhaps, in Christendom two men more radically strangers. The father, with a grand simplicity, either spoke of what interested himself, or maintained an unaffected silence. The son turned in his head for some topic that should be quite safe, that would spare him fresh evidences either of my lord's inherent grossness or of the innocence of his inhumanity; treading gingerly the ways of intercourse, like a lady gathering up her skirts in a by-path. If he made a mistake, and my lord began to abound in matter of offence, Archie drew himself up, his brow grew dark, his share of the talk expired; but

my lord would faithfully and cheerfully continue to pour out the worst of himself before his silent and offended son.

'Well, it's a poor hert that never rejoices,' he would say, at the conclusion of such a nightmare interview. 'But I must get to my plew-stilts.' And he would seclude himself as usual in the back room, and Archie go forth into the night and the city, quivering with animosity and scorn.

CHAPTER III

IN THE MATTER OF THE HANGING OF DUNCAN JOPP

It chanced in the year 1813 that Archie strayed one day into the Judiciary Court. The macer made room for the son of the presiding judge. In the dock, the centre of men's eyes, there stood a whey-coloured, misbegotten caitiff, Duncan Jopp, on trial for his life. His story, as it was raked out before him in that public scene, was one of disgrace and vice and cowardice, the very nakedness of crime; and the creature heard and it seemed at times as though he understood – as if at times he forgot the horror of the place he stood in, and remembered the shame of what had brought him there. He kept his head bowed and his hands clutched upon the rail; his hair dropped in his eyes and at times he flung it back; and now he glanced about the audience in a sudden fellness of terror, and now looked in the face of his judge and gulped. There was pinned about his throat a piece of dingy flannel; and this it was perhaps that turned the scale in Archie's mind between disgust and pity. The creature stood in a vanishing point; yet a little while, and he was still a man, and had eyes and apprehension; yet a little longer, and with a last sordid piece of pageantry, he would cease to be. And here, in the meantime, with a trait of human nature that caught at the beholder's breath, he was tending a sore throat.

Over against him, my Lord Hermiston occupied the bench in the red robes of criminal jurisdiction, his face framed in the white wig. Honest all through, he did not affect the virtue of impartiality; this was no case for refinement; there was a man to be hanged, he would have said, and he was hanging him. Nor was it possible to see his lordship, and acquit him of gusto in the task. It was plain he gloried in the exercise of his trained faculties, in the clear sight which pierced at

once into the joint of fact, in the rude, unvarnished gibes with which he demolished every figment of defence. He took his ease and jested, unbending in that solemn place with some of the freedom of the tavern; and the rag of man with the flannel round his neck was hunted gallowsward with jeers.

Duncan had a mistress, scarce less forlorn and greatly older than himself, who came up, whimpering and curtseying, to add the weight of her betrayal. My lord gave her the oath in his most roaring voice, and added an intolerant warning.

'Mind what ye say now, Janet,' said he. 'I have an e'e upon ye, I'm ill to jest with.'

Presently, after she was tremblingly embarked on her story, 'And what made ye do this, ye auld runt?' the Court interposed. 'Do ye mean to tell me ye was the panel's mistress?'

'If you please, ma loard,' whined the female.

'Godsake! ye made a bonny couple,' observed his lordship; and there was something so formidable and ferocious in his scorn that not even the galleries thought to laugh.

The summing-up contained some jewels.

'These two peetiable creatures seem to have made up thegither, it's not for us to explain why.' – 'The panel, who (whatever else he may be) appears to be equally ill set-out in mind and boady.' – 'Neither the panel nor yet the old wife appears to have had so much common sense as even to tell a lie when it was necessary.' And in the course of sentencing, my lord had this *obiter dictum*: 'I have been the means, under God, of haanging a great number, but never just such a dis-jaskit rascal as yourself.' The words were strong in themselves: the light and heat and detonation of their delivery, and the savage pleasure of the speaker in his task, made them tingle in the ears.

When all was over, Archie came forth again into a changed world. Had there been the least redeeming greatness in the crime, any obscurity, any dubiety, perhaps he might have understood. But the culprit stood, with his sore throat, in the sweat of his mortal agony, without defence or excuse; a thing to cover up with blushes; a being so much sunk beneath the zones of sympathy that pity might seem harmless. And the judge had pursued him with a monstrous, relishing

gaiety, horrible to be conceived, a trait for nightmares. It is one thing to spear a tiger, another to crush a toad; there are aesthetics even of the slaughter-house; and the loathsomeness of Duncan Jopp enveloped and infected the image of his judge.

Archie passed by his friends in the High Street with incoherent words and gestures. He saw Holyrood in a dream, remembrance of its romance awoke in him and faded; he had a vision of the old radiant stories, of Queen Mary and Prince Charlie, of the hooded stag,[1] of the splendour and crime, the velvet and bright iron of the past; and dismissed them with a cry of pain. He lay and moaned in the Hunter's Bog, and the heavens were dark above him and the grass of the field an offence. 'This is my father,' he said. 'I draw my life from him; the flesh upon my bones is his, the bread I am fed with is the wages of these horrors.' He recalled his mother, and ground his forehead in the earth. He thought of flight, and where was he to flee to? of other lives, but was there any life worth living in this den of savage and jeering animals?

The interval before the execution was like a violent dream. He met his father; he would not look at him, he could not speak to him. It seemed there was no living creature but must have been swift to recognise that imminent animosity; but the hide of the Justice-Clerk remained impenetrable. Had my lord been talkative, the truce could never have subsisted; but he was by fortune in one of his humours of sour silence; and under the very guns of his broadside Archie nursed the enthusiasm of rebellion. It seemed to him, from the top of his nineteen years' experience, as if he were marked at birth to be the perpetrator of some signal action, to set back fallen Mercy, to overthrow the usurping devil that sat, horned and hoofed, on her throne. Seductive Jacobin figments, which he had often refuted at the Speculative, swam up in his mind and startled him as with voices; and he seemed to himself to walk accompanied by an almost tangible presence of new beliefs and duties.

On the named morning he was at the place of execution. He saw the fleering rabble, the flinching wretch produced. He looked on for a while at a certain parody of devotion, which seem to strip the wretch of his last claim to manhood. Then followed the brutal instant of extinction, and the paltry dangling of the remains like a broken

jumping-jack. He had been prepared for something terrible, not for this tragic meanness. He stood a moment silent, and then – 'I denounce this God-defying murder,' he shouted; and his father, if he must have disclaimed the sentiment, might have owned the stentorian voice with which it was uttered.

Frank Innes dragged him from the spot. The two handsome lads followed the same course of study and recreation, and felt a certain mutual attraction, founded mainly on good looks. It had never gone deep; Frank was by nature a thin, jeering creature, not truly susceptible whether of feeling or inspiring friendship; and the relation between the pair was altogether on the outside, a thing of common knowledge and the pleasantries that spring from a common acquaintance. The more credit to Frank that he was appalled by Archie's outburst, and at least conceived the design of keeping him in sight, and, if possible, in hand, for the day. But Archie, who had just defied – was it God or Satan? – would not listen to the word of a college companion.

'I will not go with you,' he said. 'I do not desire your company, sir; I would be alone.'

'Here, Weir, man, don't be absurd,' said Innes, keeping a tight hold upon his sleeve. 'I will not let you go until I know what you mean to do with yourself; it's no use brandishing that staff.' For indeed at that moment Archie had made a sudden – perhaps a warlike – movement. 'This has been the most insane affair; you know it has. You know very well that I'm playing the good Samaritan. All I wish is to keep you quiet.'

'If quietness is what you wish, Mr Innes,' said Archie, 'and you will promise to leave me entirely to myself, I will tell you so much, that I am going to walk in the country and admire the beauties of nature.'

'Honour bright?' asked Frank.

'I am not in the habit of lying, Mr Innes,' retorted Archie. 'I have the honour of wishing you good-day.'

'You won't forget the Spec?' asked Innes.

'The Spec?' said Archie. 'Oh no, I won't forget the Spec.'

And the one young man carried his tortured spirit forth of the city and all the day long, by one road and another, in an endless pilgrim-

age of misery; while the other hastened smilingly to spread the news of Weir's access of insanity, and to drum up for that night a full attendance at the Speculative, where further eccentric developments might certainly be looked for. I doubt if Innes had the least belief in his prediction: I think it flowed rather from a wish to make the story as good and the scandal as great as possible; not from any ill-will to Archie – from the mere pleasure of beholding interested faces. But for all that his words were prophetic. Archie did not forget the Spec; he put in an appearance there at the due time, and, before the evening was over, had dealt a memorable shock to his companions. It chanced he was the president of the night. He sat in the same room where the Society still meets – only the portraits were not there; the men who afterwards sat for them were then but beginning their career. The same lustre of many tapers shed its light over the meeting; the same chair, perhaps, supported him that so many of us have sat in since. At times he seemed to forget the business of the evening, but even in these periods he sat with a great air of energy and determination. At times he meddled bitterly and launched with defiance those fines which are the precious and rarely used artillery of the president. He little thought, as he did so, how he resembled his father, but his friends remarked upon it, chuckling. So far, in his high place above his fellow-students, he seemed set beyond the possibility of any scandal; but his mind was made up – he was determined to fulfil the sphere of his offence. He signed to Innes (whom he had just fined, and who had just impeached his ruling) to succeed him in the chair, stepped down from the platform, and took his place by the chimney-piece, the shine of many wax tapers from above illuminating his pale face, the glow of the great red fire relieving from behind his slim figure. He had to propose, as an amendment to the next subject in the case-book, 'Whether capital punishment be consistent with God's will or man's policy?'[2]

A breath of embarrassment, of something like alarm, passed round the room, so daring did these words appear upon the lips of Hermiston's only son. But the amendment was not seconded; the previous question was promptly moved and unanimously voted, and the momentary scandal smuggled by. Innes triumphed in the fulfilment of his prophecy. He and Archie were now become the heroes of the

night; but whereas every one crowded about Innes, when the meeting broke up, but one of all his companions came to speak to Archie.

'Weir, man! that was an extraordinary raid of yours!' observed this courageous member, taking him confidentially by the arm as they went out.

'I don't think it a raid,' said Archie grimly. 'More like a war. I saw that poor brute hanged this morning, and my gorge rises at it yet.'

'Hut-tut!' returned his companion, and, dropping his arm like something hot, he sought the less tense society of others.

Archie found himself alone. The last of the faithful – or was it only the boldest of the curious? – had fled. He watched the black huddle of his fellow-students draw off down and up the street, in whispering or boisterous gangs. And the isolation of the moment weighed upon him like an omen and an emblem of his destiny in life. Bred up in unbroken fear himself, among trembling servants, and in a house which (at the least ruffle in the master's voice) shuddered into silence, he saw himself on the brink of the red valley of war, and measured the danger and length of it with awe. He made a détour in the glimmer and shadow of the streets, came into the back stable lane, and watched for a long while the light burn steady in the Judge's room. The longer he gazed upon that illuminated window-blind, the more blank became the picture of the man who sat behind it, endlessly turning over sheets of process, pausing to sip a glass of port, or rising and passing heavily about his book-lined walls to verify some reference. He could not combine the brutal judge and the industrious, dispassionate student; the connecting link escaped him; from such a dual nature, it was impossible he should predict behaviour; and he asked himself if he had done well to plunge into a business of which the end could not be foreseen; and presently after, with a sickening decline of confidence, if he had done loyally to strike his father. For he had struck him – defied him twice over and before a cloud of witnesses – struck him a public buffet before crowds. Who had called him to judge his father in these precarious and high questions? The office was usurped. It might have become a stranger; in a son – there was no blinking it – in a son, it was disloyal. And now, between these two natures so antipathetic, so hateful to each other, there was depending

an unpardonable affront: and the providence of God alone might foresee the manner in which it would be resented by Lord Hermiston.

These misgivings tortured him all night and arose with him in the winter's morning; they followed him from class to class, they made him shrinkingly sensitive to every shade of manner in his companions, they sounded in his ears through the current voice of the professor; and he brought them home with him at night unabated and indeed increased. The cause of this increase lay in a chance encounter with the celebrated Dr Gregory.[3] Archie stood looking vaguely in the lighted window of a book shop, trying to nerve himself for the approaching ordeal. My lord and he had met and parted in the morning as they had now done for long, with scarcely the ordinary civilities of life; and it was plain to the son that nothing had yet reached the father's ears. Indeed, when he recalled the awful countenance of my lord, a timid hope sprang up in him that perhaps there would be found no one bold enough to carry tales. If this were so, he asked himself, would he begin again? and he found no answer. It was at this moment that a hand was laid upon his arm, and a voice said in his ear, 'My dear Mr Archie, you had better come and see me.'

He started, turned around, and found himself face to face with Dr Gregory. 'And why should I come to see you?' he asked, with the defiance of the miserable.

'Because you are looking exceeding ill,' said the doctor, 'and you very evidently want looking after, my young friend. Good folk are scarce, you know; and it is not every one that would be quite so much missed as yourself. It is not every one that Hermiston would miss.'

And with a nod and a smile, the doctor passed on.

A moment after, Archie was in pursuit, and had in turn, but more roughly, seized him by the arm.

'What do you mean? what did you mean by saying that? What makes you think that Hermis – my father would have missed me?'

The doctor turned about and looked him all over with a clinical eye. A far more stupid man than Dr Gregory might have guessed the truth; but ninety-nine out of a hundred, even if they had been equally inclined to kindness, would have blundered by some touch of charitable exaggeration. The doctor was better inspired. He knew the

father well; in that white face of intelligence and suffering, he divined something of the son; and he told, without apology or adornment, the plain truth.

'When you had the measles, Mr Archibald, you had them gey and ill; and I thought you were going to slip between my fingers,' he said. 'Well, your father was anxious. How did I know it? says you. Simply because I am a trained observer. The sign that I saw him make ten thousand would have missed; and perhaps – *perhaps*, I say, because he's a hard man to judge of – but perhaps he never made another. A strange thing to consider! It was this. One day I came to him: "Hermiston," said I, "there's a change." He never said a word, just glowered at me (if ye'll pardon the phrase) like a wild beast. "A change for the better," said I. And I distinctly heard him take his breath.'

The doctor left no opportunity for anti-climax; nodding his cocked hat (a piece of antiquity to which he clung) and repeating 'Distinctly' with raised eyebrows, he took his departure, and left Archie speechless in the street.

The anecdote might be called infinitely little, and yet its meaning for Archie was immense. 'I did not know the old man had so much blood in him.' He had never dreamed this sire of his, this aboriginal antique, this adamantine Adam, had even so much of a heart as to be moved in the least degree for another – and that other himself, who had insulted him! With the generosity of youth, Archie was instantly under arms upon the other side: had instantly created a new image of Lord Hermiston, that of a man who was all iron without and all sensibility within. The mind of the vile jester, the tongue that had pursued Duncan Jopp with unmanly insults, the unbeloved countenance that he had known and feared for so long, were all forgotten; and he hastened home, impatient to confess his misdeeds, impatient to throw himself on the mercy of this imaginary character.

He was not to be long without a rude awakening. It was in the gloaming when he drew near the doorstep of the lighted house, and was aware of the figure of his father approaching from the opposite side. Little daylight lingered; but on the door being opened, the strong yellow shine of the lamp gushed out upon the landing and shone full on Archie, as he stood, in the old-fashioned observance of respect, to

yield precedence. The Judge came without haste, stepping stately and firm; his chin raised, his face (as he entered the lamplight) strongly illumined, his mouth set hard. There was never a wink of change in his expression; without looking to the right or left, he mounted the stair, passed close to Archie, and entered the house. Instinctively, the boy, upon his first coming, had made a movement to meet him; instinctively, he recoiled against the railing, as the old man swept by him in a pomp of indignation. Words were needless; he knew all – perhaps more than all – and the hour of judgement was at hand.

It is possible that, in this sudden revulsion of hope and before these symptoms of impending danger, Archie might have fled. But not even that was left to him. My lord, after hanging up his cloak and hat, turned round in the lighted entry, and made him an imperative and silent gesture with his thumb, and with the strange instinct of obedience, Archie followed him into the house.

All dinner time there reigned over the Judge's table a palpable silence, and as soon as the solids were despatched he rose to his feet.

'M'Killop, tak' the wine into my room,' said he; and then to his son: 'Archie, you and me has to have a talk.'

It was at this sickening moment that Archie's courage, for the first and last time, entirely deserted him. 'I have an appointment,' said he.

'It'll have to be broken, then,' said Hermiston, and led the way into his study.

The lamp was shaded, the fire trimmed to a nicety, the table covered deep with orderly documents, the backs of law books made a frame upon all sides that was only broken by the window and the doors.

For a moment Hermiston warmed his hands at the fire, presenting his back to Archie; then suddenly disclosed on him the terrors of the Hanging Face.

'What's this I hear of ye?' he asked.

There was no answer possible to Archie.

'I'll have to tell ye, then,' pursued Hermiston. 'It seems ye've been skirling against the father that begot ye, and one of His Maijesty's Judges in this land; and that in the public street, and while an order of the Court was being executit. Forbye which, it would appear that

ye've been airing your opeenions in a Coallege Debatin' Society'; he paused a moment: and then, with extraordinary bitterness, added: 'Ye damned eediot.'

'I had meant to tell you,' stammered Archie. 'I see you are well informed.'

'Muckle obleeged to ye,' said his lordship, and took his usual seat. 'And so you disapprove of Caapital Punishment?' he added.

'I am sorry, sir, I do,' said Archie.

'I am sorry, too,' said his lordship. 'And now, if you please, we shall approach this business with a little more parteecularity. I hear that at the hanging of Duncan Jopp – and, man! ye had a fine client there – in the middle of all the riffraff of the ceety, ye thought fit to cry out, "This is a damned murder, and my gorge rises at the man that haangit him." '

'No, sir, these were not my words,' cried Archie.

'What were yer words, then?' asked the Judge.

'I believe I said, "I denounce it as a murder!" ' said the son, 'I beg your pardon – a God-defying murder. I have no wish to conceal the truth,' he added, and looked his father for a moment in the face.

'God, it would only need that of it next!' cried Hermiston. 'There was nothing about your gorge rising, then?'

'That was afterwards, my lord, as I was leaving the Speculative. I said I had been to see the miserable creature hanged, and my gorge rose at it.'

'Did ye, though?' said Hermiston. 'And I suppose ye knew who haangit him?'

'I was present at the trial; I ought to tell you that, I ought to explain. I ask your pardon beforehand for any expression that may seem undutiful. The position in which I stand is wretched,' said the unhappy hero, now fairly face to face with the business he had chosen. 'I have been reading some of your cases. I was present while Jopp was tried. It was a hideous business. Father, it was a hideous thing! Grant he was vile, why should you hunt him with a vileness equal to his own? It was done with glee – that is the word – you did it with glee, and I looked on, God help me! with horror.'

'You're a young gentleman that doesna approve of Caapital Punish-

ment,' said Hermiston. 'Weel, I'm an auld man that does. I was glad to get Jopp haangit, and what for would I pretend I wasna? You're all for honesty, it seems; you couldn't even steik your mouth on the public street. What for should I steik mines upon the bench, the King's officer, bearing the sword, a dreid to evil-doers, as I was from the beginning, and as I will be to the end! Mair than enough of it! Heedious! I never gave twa thoughts to heediousness, I have no call to be bonny. I'm a man that gets through with my day's business, and let that suffice.'

The ring of sarcasm had died out of his voice as he went on; the plain words became invested with some of the dignity of the Justice-seat.

'It would be telling you if you could say as much,' the speaker resumed. 'But ye cannot. Ye've been reading some of my cases, ye say. But it was not for the law in them, it was to spy out your faither's nakedness, a fine employment in a son. You're splairging; you're running at lairge in life like a wild nowt. It's impossible you should think any longer of coming to the Bar. You're not fit for it; no splairger is. And another thing: son of mines or no son of mines, you have flung fylement in public on one of the Senators of the Coallege of Justice, and I would make it my business to see that ye were never admitted there yourself. There is a kind of a decency to be observit. Then comes the next of it – what am I to do with ye next? Ye'll have to find some kind of a trade, for I'll never support ye in idleset. What do ye fancy ye'll be fit for? The pulpit? Na, they could never get diveenity into that bloackhead. Him that the law of man whammles is no likely to do muckle better by the law of God. What would ye make of hell? Wouldna your gorge rise at that? Na, there's no room for splairgers under the fower quarters of John Calvin. What else is there? Speak up. Have ye got nothing of your own?'

'Father, let me go to the Peninsula,'[4] said Archie. 'That's all I'm fit for – to fight.'

'All? quo' he!' returned the Judge. 'And it would be enough too, if I thought it. But I'll never trust ye so near the French, you that's so Frenchifeed.'

'You do me injustice there, sir,' said Archie. 'I am loyal; I will not boast; but any interest I may have ever felt in the French –'

'Have ye been so loyal to me?' interrupted his father.

There came no reply.

'I think not,' continued Hermiston. 'And I would send no man to be a servant of the King, God bless him! that has proved such a shauchling son to his own faither. You can splairge here on Edinburgh street, and where's the hairm? It doesna play buff on me! And if there were twenty thousand eediots like yourself, sorrow a Duncan Jopp would hang the fewer. But there's no splairging possible in a camp; and if you were to go to it, you would find out for yourself whether Lord Well'n'ton approves of caapital punishment or not. You a sodger!' he cried, with a sudden burst of scorn. 'Ye auld wife, the sodgers would bray at ye like cuddies!'

As at the drawing of a curtain, Archie was aware of some illogicality in his position, and stood abashed. He had a strong impression, besides, of the essential valour of the old gentleman before him, how conveyed it would be hard to say.

'Well, have ye no other proposeetion?' said my lord again.

'You have taken this so calmly, sir, that I cannot but stand ashamed,' began Archie.

'I'm nearer voamiting, though, than you would fancy,' said my lord.

The blood rose to Archie's brow.

'I beg your pardon, I should have said that you had accepted my affront . . . I admit it was an affront; I did not think to apologise, but I do, I ask your pardon; it will not be so again, I pass you my word of honour . . . I should have said that I admired your magnanimity with – this – offender,' Archie concluded with a gulp.

'I have no other son, ye see,' said Hermiston. 'A bonny one I have gotten! But I must just do the best I can wi' him, and what am I to do? If ye had been younger, I would have wheepit ye for this rideeculous exhibeetion. The way it is, I have just to grin and bear. But one thing is to be clearly understood. As a faither, I must grin and bear it; but if I had been the Lord Advocate instead of the Lord Justice-Clerk, son or no son, Mr Erchibald Weir would have been in a jyle the night.'

Archie was now dominated. Lord Hermiston was coarse and cruel;

and yet the son was aware of a bloomless nobility, an ungracious abnegation of the man's self in the man's office. At every word, this sense of the greatness of Lord Hermiston's spirit struck more home; and along with it that of his own impotence, who had struck – and perhaps basely struck – at his own father, and not reached so far as to have even nettled him.

'I place myself in your hands without reserve,' he said.

'That's the first sensible word I've had of ye the night,' said Hermiston. 'I can tell ye, that would have been the end of it, the one way or the other; but it's better ye should come there yourself than that I would have had to hirstle ye. Weel, by my way of it – and my way is the best – there's just the one thing it's possible that ye might be with decency, and that's a laird. Ye'll be out of hairm's way at the least of it. If ye have to rowt, ye can rowt amang the kye; and the maist feck of the caapital punishment ye're like to come across'll be guddling trouts. Now, I'm for no idle lairdies; every man has to work, if it's only at peddling ballants; to work, or to be wheepit, or to be haangit. If I set ye down at Hermiston, I'll have to see you work that place the way it has never been workit yet; ye must ken about the sheep like a herd; ye must be my grieve there, and I'll see that I gain by ye. Is that understood?'

'I will do my best,' said Archie.

'Well, then, I'll send Kirstie word the morn, and ye can go yourself the day after,' said Hermiston. 'And just try to be less of an eediot!' he concluded, with a freezing smile, and turned immediately to the papers on his desk.

CHAPTER IV

OPINIONS OF THE BENCH

Late the same night, after a disordered walk, Archie was admitted into Lord Glenalmond's dining-room, where he sat, with a book upon his knee, beside three frugal coals of fire. In his robes upon the bench, Glenalmond had a certain air of burliness: plucked of these, it was a may-pole of a man that rose unsteadily from his chair to give his visitor welcome. Archie had suffered much in the last days, he had suffered again that evening; his face was white and drawn, his eyes wild and dark. But Lord Glenalmond greeted him without the least mark of surprise or curiosity.

'Come in, come in,' said he. 'Come in and take a seat. Carstairs' (to his servant), 'make up the fire, and then you can bring a bit of supper,' and again to Archie, with a very trivial accent: 'I was half expecting you,' he added.

'No supper,' said Archie. 'It is impossible that I should eat.'

'Not impossible,' said the tall old man, laying his hand upon his shoulder, 'and, if you will believe me, necessary.'

'You know what brings me?' said Archie, as soon as the servant had left the room.

'I have a guess, I have a guess,' replied Glenalmond. 'We will talk of it presently – when Carstairs has come and gone, and you have had a piece of my good Cheddar cheese and a pull at the porter tankard: not before.'

'It is impossible I should eat,' repeated Archie.

'Tut, tut!' said Lord Glenalmond. 'You have eaten nothing to-day, and, I venture to add, nothing yesterday. There is no case that may not be made worse; this may be a very disagreeable business, but

if you were to fall sick and die, it would be still more so, and for all concerned – for all concerned.'

'I see you must know all,' said Archie. 'Where did you hear it?'

'In the mart of scandal, in the Parliament House,' said Glenalmond. 'It runs riot below among the bar and the public, but it sifts up to us upon the bench, and rumour has some of her voices even in the divisions.'[1]

Carstairs returned at this moment, and rapidly laid out a little supper; during which Lord Glenalmond spoke at large and a little vaguely on indifferent subjects, so that it might be rather said of him that he made a cheerful noise, than that he contributed to human conversation; and Archie sat upon the other side, not heeding him, brooding over his wrongs and errors.

But so soon as the servant was gone, he broke forth again at once. 'Who told my father? Who dared to tell him? Could it have been you?'

'No, it was not me,' said the Judge; 'although – to be quite frank with you, and after I had seen and warned you – it might have been me. I believe it was Glenkindie.'

'That shrimp!' cried Archie.

'As you say, that shrimp,' returned my lord; 'although really it is scarce a fitting mode of expression for one of the Senators of the College of Justice. We were hearing the parties in a long, crucial case, before the fifteen; Creech was moving at some length for an infeftment; when I saw Glenkindie lean forward to Hermiston with his hand over his mouth and make him a secret communication. No one could have guessed its nature from your father; from Glenkindie, yes, his malice sparked out of him a little grossly. But your father, no. A man of granite. The next moment he pounced upon Creech. "Mr Creech," says he, "I'll take a look of that sasine," and for thirty minutes after,' said Glenalmond, with a smile, 'Messrs Creech and Co. were fighting a pretty uphill battle, which resulted, I need hardly add, in their total rout. The case was dismissed. No, I doubt if ever I heard Hermiston better inspired. He was literally rejoicing *in apicibus juris*.'[2]

Archie was able to endure no longer. He thrust his plate away and interrupted the deliberate and insignificant stream of talk. 'Here,' he

said, 'I have made a fool of myself, if I have not made something worse. Do you judge between us – judge between a father and a son. I can speak to you; it is not like . . . I will tell you what I feel and what I mean to do; and you shall be the judge,' he repeated.

'I decline jurisdiction,' said Glenalmond, with extreme seriousness. 'But, my dear boy, if it will do you any good to talk, and if it will interest you at all to hear what I may choose to say when I have heard you, I am quite at your command. Let an old man say it, for once, and not need to blush: I love you like a son.'

There came a sudden sharp sound in Archie's throat. 'Ay,' he cried, 'and there it is! Love! Like a son! And how do you think I love my father?'

'Quietly, quietly,' says my lord.

'I will be very quiet,' replied Archie. 'And I will be baldly frank. I do not love my father; I wonder sometimes if I do not hate him. There's my shame; perhaps my sin; at least, and in the sight of God, not my fault. How was I to love him? He has never spoken to me, never smiled upon me; I do not think he ever touched me. You know the way he talks? You do not talk so, yet you can sit and hear him without shuddering, and I cannot. My soul is sick when he begins with it; I could smite him in the mouth. And all that's nothing. I was at the trial of this Jopp. You were not there, but you must have heard him often; the man's notorious for it, for being – look at my position! he's my father and this is how I have to speak of him – notorious for being a brute and cruel and a coward. Lord Glenalmond, I give you my word, when I came out of that Court, I longed to die – the shame of it was beyond my strength: but I – I –' he rose from his seat and began to pace the room in a disorder. 'Well, who am I? A boy, who has never been tried, has never done anything except this twopenny impotent folly with my father. But I tell you, my lord, and I know myself, I am at least that kind of a man – or that kind of a boy, if you prefer it – that I could die in torments rather than that any one should suffer as that scoundrel suffered. Well, and what have I done? I see it now. I have made a fool of myself, as I said in the beginning; and I have gone back, and asked my father's pardon, and placed myself wholly in his hands – and he has sent me to Hermiston,' with a wretched smile, 'for

life, I suppose – and what can I say? he strikes me as having done quite right, and let me off better than I had deserved.'

'My poor, dear boy!' observed Glenalmond. 'My poor, dear and, if you will allow me to say so, very foolish boy! You are only discovering where you are; to one of your temperament, or of mine, a painful discovery. The world was not made for us; it was made for ten hundred millions of men, all different from each other and from us; there's no royal road there, we just have to sclamber and tumble. Don't think that I am at all disposed to be surprised; don't suppose that I ever think of blaming you; indeed I rather admire! But there fall to be offered one or two observations on the case which occur to me and which (if you will listen to them dispassionately) may be the means of inducing you to view the matter more calmly. First of all, I cannot acquit you of a good deal of what is called intolerance. You seem to have been very much offended because your father talks a little sculduddery after dinner, which it is perfectly licit for him to do, and which (although I am not very fond of it myself) appears to be entirely an affair of taste. Your father, I scarcely like to remind you, since it is so trite a commonplace, is older than yourself. At least, he is *major* and *sui juris*,[3] and may please himself in the matter of his conversation. And, do you know, I wonder if he might not have as good an answer against you and me? We say we sometimes find him coarse, but I suspect he might retort that he finds us always dull. Perhaps a relevant exception.'

He beamed on Archie, but no smile could be elicited.

'And now,' proceeded the Judge, 'for "Archibald on Capital Punishment." This is a very plausible academic opinion; of course I do not and I cannot hold it; but that's not to say that many able and excellent persons have not done so in the past. Possibly, in the past also, I may have a little dipped myself in the same heresy. My third client, or possibly my fourth, was the means of a return in my opinions. I never saw the man I more believed in; I would have put my hand in the fire, I would have gone to the cross for him; and when it came to trial he was gradually pictured before me, by undeniable probation, in the light of so gross, so cold-blooded, and so black-hearted a villain, that I had a mind to have cast my brief upon the table. I was then boiling

against the man with even a more tropical temperature than I had been boiling for him. But I said to myself: "No, you have taken up his case; and because you have changed your mind it must not be suffered to let drop. All that rich tide of eloquence that you prepared last night with so much enthusiasm is out of place, and yet you must not desert him, you must say something." So I said something, and I got him off. It made my reputation. But an experience of that kind is formative. A man must not bring his passions to the bar – or to the bench.'

This story had slightly rekindled Archie's interest. 'I could never deny,' he began – 'I mean I can conceive that some men would be better dead. But who are we to know all the springs of God's unfortunate creatures? Who are we to trust ourselves where it seems that God Himself must think twice before He treads, and to do it with delight? Yes, with delight. *Tigris ut aspera.*'[4]

'Perhaps not a pleasant spectacle,' said Glenalmond. 'And yet, do you know, I think somehow a great one.'

'I've had a long talk with him to-night,' said Archie.

'I was supposing so,' said Glenalmond.

'And he struck me – I cannot deny that he struck me as something very big,' pursued the son. 'Yes, he is big. He never spoke about himself; only about me. I suppose I admired him. The dreadful part –'

'Suppose we did not talk about that,' interrupted Glenalmond. 'You know it very well, it cannot in any way help that you should brood upon it, and I sometimes wonder whether you and I – who are a pair of sentimentalists – are quite good judges of plain men.'

'How do you mean?' asked Archie.

'*Fair* judges, I mean,' replied Glenalmond. 'Can we be just to them? Do we not ask too much? There was a word of yours just now that impressed me a little when you asked me who we were to know all the springs of God's unfortunate creatures. You applied that, as I understood, to capital cases only. But does it – I ask myself – does it not apply all through? Is it any less difficult to judge of a good man or of a half-good man, than of the worst criminal at the bar? And may not each have relevant excuses?'

'Ah, but we do not talk of punishing the good,' cried Archie.

'No, we do not talk of it,' said Glenalmond. 'But I think we do it. Your father, for instance.'

'You think I have punished him?' cried Archie.

Lord Glenalmond bowed his head.

'I think I have,' said Archie. 'And the worst is, I think he feels it! How much, who can tell, with such a being? But I think he does.'

'And I am sure of it,' said Glenalmond.

'Has he spoken to you, then?' cried Archie.

'Oh, no,' replied the Judge.

'I tell you honestly,' said Archie, 'I want to make it up to him. I will go, I have already pledged myself to go, to Hermiston. That was to him. And now I pledge myself to you, in the sight of God, that I will close my mouth on capital punishment and all other subjects where our views may clash, for – how long shall I say? when shall I have sense enough? – ten years. Is that well?'

'It is well,' said my lord.

'As far as it goes,' said Archie. 'It is enough as regards myself, it is to lay down enough of my conceit. But as regards him, whom I have publicly insulted? What am I to do to him? How do you pay attentions to a – an Alp like that?'

'Only in one way,' replied Glenalmond. 'Only by obedience, punctual, prompt, and scrupulous.'

'And I promise that he shall have it,' answered Archie. 'I offer you my hand in pledge of it.'

'And I take your hand as a solemnity,' replied the Judge. 'God bless you, my dear, and enable you to keep your promise. God guide you in the true way, and spare your days, and preserve to you your honest heart.' At that, he kissed the young man upon the forehead in a gracious, distant, antiquated way; and instantly launched, with a marked change of voice, into another subject. 'And now, let us replenish the tankard; and I believe, if you will try my Cheddar again, you would find you had a better appetite. The Court has spoken, and the case is dismissed.'

'No, there is one thing I must say,' cried Archie. 'I must say it in justice to himself. I know – I believe faithfully, slavishly, after our talk – he will never ask me anything unjust. I am proud to feel it, that we have that much in common, I am proud to say it to you.'

The Judge, with shining eyes, raised his tankard. 'And I think perhaps that we might permit ourselves a toast,' said he. 'I should like to propose the health of a man very different from me and very much my superior – a man from whom I have often differed, who has often (in the trivial expression) rubbed me the wrong way, but whom I have never ceased to respect and, I may add, to be not a little afraid of. Shall I give you his name?'

'The Lord Justice-Clerk, Lord Hermiston,' said Archie, almost with gaiety; and the pair drank the toast deeply.

It was not precisely easy to re-establish, after these emotional passages, the natural flow of conversation. But the Judge eked out what was wanting with kind looks, produced his snuff-box (which was very rarely seen) to fill in a pause, and at last, despairing of any further social success, was upon the point of getting down a book to read a favourite passage, when there came a rather startling summons at the front door, and Carstairs ushered in my Lord Glenkindie, hot from a midnight supper. I am not aware that Glenkindie was ever a beautiful object, being short, and gross-bodied, and with an expression of sensuality comparable to a bear's. At that moment, coming in hissing from many potations, with a flushed countenance and blurred eyes, he was strikingly contrasted with the tall, pale, kingly figure of Glenalmond. A rush of confused thought came over Archie – of shame that this was one of his father's elect friends; of pride, that at the least of it Hermiston could carry his liquor; and last of all, of rage, that he should have here under his eyes the man that had betrayed him. And then that, too, passed away; and he sat quiet, biding his opportunity.

The tipsy senator plunged at once into an explanation with Glenalmond. There was a point reserved yesterday, he had been able to make neither head nor tail of it, and seeing lights in the house, he had just dropped in for a glass of porter – and at this point he became aware of the third person. Archie saw the cod's mouth and the blunt lips of Glenkindie gape at him for a moment, and the recognition twinkle in his eyes.

'Who's this?' said he. 'What? Is this possibly you, Don Quickshot? And how are ye? And how's your father? And what's all this we hear of you? It seems you're a most extraordinary leveller, by all tales. No

king, no parliaments, and your gorge rises at the macers, worthy men! Hoot, toot! Dear, dear me! Your father's son, too! Most rideeculous!'

Archie was on his feet, flushing a little at the reappearance of his unhappy figure of speech, but perfectly self-possessed. 'My lord – and you, Lord Glenalmond, my dear friend,' he began, 'this is a happy chance for me, that I can make my confession and offer my apologies to two of you at once.'

'Ah, but I don't know about that. Confession? It'll be judeecial, my young friend,' cried the jocular Glenkindie. 'And I'm afraid to listen to ye. Think if ye were to make me a coanvert!'

'If you would allow me, my lord,' returned Archie, 'what I have to say is very serious to me; and be pleased to be humorous after I am gone!'

'Remember, I'll hear nothing against the macers!' put in the incorrigible Glenkindie.

But Archie continued as though he had not spoken. 'I have played, both yesterday and to-day, a part for which I can only offer the excuse of youth. I was so unwise as to go to an execution; it seems I made a scene at the gallows; not content with which, I spoke the same night in a college society against capital punishment. This is the extent of what I have done, and in case you hear more alleged against me, I protest my innocence. I have expressed my regret already to my father, who is so good as to pass my conduct over – in a degree, and upon the condition that I am to leave my law studies' . . .[5]

CHAPTER V

WINTER ON THE MOORS

I AT HERMISTON

The road to Hermiston runs for a great part of the way up the valley of a stream, a favourite with anglers and with midges, full of falls and pools, and shaded by willows and natural woods of birch. Here and there, but at great distances, a byway branches off, and a gaunt farm-house may be descried above in a fold of the hill; but the more part of the time, the road would be quite empty of passage and the hills of habitation. Hermiston parish is one of the least populous in Scotland; and, by the time you came that length, you would scarce be surprised at the inimitable smallness of the kirk, a dwarfish, ancient place seated for fifty, and standing in a green by the burn-side among two-score gravestones. The manse close by, although no more than a cottage, is surrounded by the brightness of a flower-garden and the straw roofs of bees; and the whole colony, kirk and manse, garden and graveyard, finds harbourage in a grove of rowans, and lies all the year round in a great silence broken only by the drone of the bees, the tinkle of the burn, and the bell on Sundays. A mile beyond the kirk the road leaves the valley by a precipitous ascent, and brings you a little after to the place of Hermiston, where it comes to an end in the back-yard before the coach-house. All beyond and about is the great field of the hills; the plover, the curlew, and the lark cry there; the wind blows as it blows in a ship's rigging, hard and cold and pure; and the hill-tops huddle one behind another like a herd of cattle into the sunset.

The house was sixty years old, unsightly, comfortable; a farm-yard and a kitchen-garden on the left, with a fruit wall where little

hard green pears came to their maturity about the end of October.

The policy (as who should say the park) was of some extent, but very ill reclaimed; heather and moorfowl had crossed the boundary wall and spread and roosted within; and it would have tasked a landscape gardener to say where policy ended and unpolicied nature began. My lord had been led by the influence of Mr Sheriff Scott[1] into a considerable design of planting; many acres were accordingly set out with fir, and the little feathery besoms gave a false scale and lent a strange air of a toy-shop to the moors. A great, rooty sweetness of bogs was in the air, and at all seasons an infinite melancholy piping of hill birds. Standing so high and with so little shelter, it was a cold, exposed house, splashed by showers, drenched by continuous rains that made the gutters to spout, beaten upon and buffeted by all the winds of heaven; and the prospect would be often black with tempest, and often white with the snows of winter. But the house was wind and weather proof, the hearths were kept bright, and the rooms pleasant with live fires of peat; and Archie might sit of an evening and hear the squalls bugle on the moorland, and watch the fire prosper in the earthy fuel, and the smoke winding up the chimney, and drink deep of the pleasures of shelter.

Solitary as the place was, Archie did not want neighbours. Every night, if he chose, he might go down to the manse and share a 'brewst' of toddy with the minister – a hare-brained ancient gentleman, long and light and still active, though his knees were loosened with age, and his voice broke continually in childish trebles – and his lady wife, a heavy, comely dame, without a word to say for herself beyond good-even and good-day. Harum-scarum, clodpole young lairds of the neighbourhood paid him the compliment of a visit. Young Hay of Romanes rode down to call, on his crop-eared pony; young Pringle of Drumanno came up on his bony grey. Hay remained on the hospitable field, and must be carried to bed; Pringle got somehow to his saddle about 3 A.M., and (as Archie stood with the lamp on the upper doorstep) lurched, uttered a senseless view-holloa, and vanished out of the small circle of illumination like a wraith. Yet a minute or two longer the clatter of his break-neck flight was audible, then it was cut off by the intervening steepness of the hill; and again, a great

while after, the renewed beating of phantom horse-hoofs, far in the valley of the Hermiston, showed that the horse at least, if not his rider, was still on the homeward way.

There was a Tuesday Club at the 'Cross-keys' in Crossmichael, where the young bloods of the countryside congregated and drank deep on a percentage of the expense, so that he was left gainer who should have drunk the most. Archie had no great mind to this diversion, but he took it like a duty laid upon him, went with a decent regularity, did his manfullest with the liquor, held up his head in the local jests, and got home again and was able to put up his horse, to the admiration of Kirstie and the lass that helped her. He dined at Driffel, supped at Windielaws. He went to the New Year's ball at Huntsfield and was made welcome, and thereafter rode to hounds with my Lord Muirfell, upon whose name, as that of a legitimate Lord of Parliament, in a work so full of Lords of Session, my pen should pause reverently. Yet the same fate attended him here as in Edinburgh. The habit of solitude tends to perpetuate itself, and an austerity of which he was quite unconscious, and a pride which seemed arrogance, and perhaps was chiefly shyness, discouraged and offended his new companions. Hay did not return more than twice, Pringle never at all, and there came a time when Archie even desisted from the Tuesday Club, and became in all things – what he had had the name of almost from the first – the Recluse of Hermiston. High-nosed Miss Pringle of Drumanno and high-stepping Miss Marshall of the Mains were understood to have had a difference of opinion about him the day after the ball – he was none the wiser, he could not suppose himself to be remarked by these entrancing ladies. At the ball itself my Lord Muirfell's daughter, the Lady Flora, spoke to him twice, and the second time with a touch of appeal, so that her colour rose and her voice trembled a little in his ear, like a passing grace in music. He stepped back with a heart on fire, coldly and not ungracefully excused himself, and a little after watched her dancing with young Drumanno of the empty laugh, and was harrowed at the sight, and raged to himself that this was a world in which it was given to Drumanno to please, and to himself only to stand aside and envy. He seemed excluded, as of right, from the favour of such society – seemed to extinguish mirth

wherever he came, and was quick to feel the wound, and desist, and retire into solitude. If he had but understood the figure he presented, and the impression he made on these bright eyes and tender hearts; if he had but guessed that the Recluse of Hermiston, young, graceful, well spoken, but always cold, stirred the maidens of the county with the charm of Byronism when Byronism was new, it may be questioned whether his destiny might not even yet have been modified. It may be questioned, and I think it should be doubted. It was in his horoscope to be parsimonious of pain to himself, or of the chance of pain, even to the avoidance of any opportunity of pleasure; to have a Roman sense of duty, an instinctive aristocracy of manners and taste; to be the son of Adam Weir and Jean Rutherford.

2 KIRSTIE

Kirstie was now over fifty, and might have sat to a sculptor. Long of limb, and still light of foot, deep-breasted, robust-loined, her golden hair not yet mingled with any trace of silver, the years had but caressed and embellished her. By the lines of a rich and vigorous maternity, she seemed destined to be the bride of heroes and the mother of their children; and behold, by the iniquity of fate, she had passed through her youth alone, and drew near to the confines of age, a childless woman. The tender ambitions that she had received at birth had been, by time and disappointment, diverted into a certain barren zeal of industry and fury of interference. She carried her thwarted ardours into housework, she washed floors with her empty heart. If she could not win the love of one with love, she must dominate all by her temper. Hasty, wordy, and wrathful, she had a drawn quarrel with most of her neighbours, and with the others not much more than armed neutrality. The grieve's wife had been 'sneisty'; the sister of the gardener who kept house for him had shown herself 'upsitten'; and she wrote to Lord Hermiston about once a year demanding the discharge of the offenders, and justifying the demand by much wealth of detail. For it must not be supposed that the quarrel rested with the wife and did not take in the husband also – or with the gardener's

sister, and did not speedily include the gardener himself. As the upshot of all this petty quarrelling and intemperate speech, she was practically excluded (like a lightkeeper on his tower) from the comforts of human association; except with her own indoor drudge, who, being but a lassie and entirely at her mercy, must submit to the shifty weather of 'the mistress's' moods without complaint, and be willing to take buffets or caresses according to the temper of the hour. To Kirstie, thus situate and in the Indian summer of her heart, which was slow to submit to age, the gods sent this equivocal good thing of Archie's presence. She had known him in the cradle and paddled him when he misbehaved; and yet, as she had not so much as set eyes on him since he was eleven and had his last serious illness, the tall, slender, refined, and rather melancholy young gentleman of twenty came upon her with the shock of a new acquaintance. He was 'Young Hermiston,' 'the laird himsel': he had an air of distinctive superiority, a cold straight glance of his black eyes, that abashed the woman's tantrums in the beginning, and therefore the possibility of any quarrel was excluded. He was new, and therefore immediately aroused her curiosity; he was reticent, and kept it awake. And lastly he was dark and she fair, and he was male and she female, the everlasting fountains of interest.

Her feeling partook of the loyalty of a clanswoman, the hero-worship of a maiden aunt, and the idolatry due to a god. No matter what he had asked of her, ridiculous or tragic, she would have done it and joyed to do it. Her passion, for it was nothing less, entirely filled her. It was a rich physical pleasure to make his bed or light his lamp for him when he was absent, to pull off his wet boots or wait on him at dinner when he returned. A young man who should have so doted on the idea, moral and physical, of any woman, might be properly described as being in love, head and heels, and would have behaved himself accordingly. But Kirstie – though her heart leaped at his coming footsteps – though, when he patted her shoulder, her face brightened for the day – had not a hope or thought beyond the present moment and its perpetuation to the end of time. Till the end of time she would have had nothing altered, but still continue delightedly to serve her idol, and be repaid (say twice in the month) with a clap on the shoulder.

I have said her heart leaped – it is the accepted phrase. But rather, when she was alone in any chamber of the house, and heard his foot passing on the corridors, something in her bosom rose slowly until her breath was suspended, and as slowly fell again with a deep sigh, when the steps had passed and she was disappointed of her eyes' desire. This perpetual hunger and thirst of his presence kept her all day on the alert. When he went forth at morning, she would stand and follow him with admiring looks. As it grew late and drew to the time of his return, she would steal forth to a corner of the policy wall and be seen standing there sometimes by the hour together, gazing with shaded eyes, waiting the exquisite and barren pleasure of his view a mile off on the mountains. When at night she had trimmed and gathered the fire, turned down his bed, and laid out his night-gear – when there was no more to be done for the king's pleasure, but to remember him fervently in her usually very tepid prayers, and go to bed brooding upon his perfections, his future career, and what she should give him the next day for dinner – there still remained before her one more opportunity; she was still to take in the tray and say goodnight. Sometimes Archie would glance up from his book with a preoccupied nod and a perfunctory salutation which was in truth a dismissal; sometimes – and by degrees more often – the volume would be laid aside, he would meet her coming with a look of relief; and the conversation would be engaged, last out the supper, and be prolonged till the small hours by the waning fire. It was no wonder that Archie was fond of company after his solitary days; and Kirstie, upon her side, exerted all the arts of her vigorous nature to ensnare his attention. She would keep back some piece of news during dinner to be fired off with the entrance of the supper tray, and form as it were the *lever de rideau*[2] of the evening's entertainment. Once he had heard her tongue wag, she made sure of the result. From one subject to another she moved by insidious transitions, fearing the least silence, fearing almost to give him time for an answer lest it should slip into a hint of separation. Like so many people of her class, she was a brave narrator; her place was on the hearth-rug and she made it a rostrum, miming her stories as she told them, fitting them with vital detail, spinning them out with endless 'quo' he's' and 'quo' she's,' her voice sinking into a whisper

over the supernatural or the horrific; until she would suddenly spring up in affected surprise, and pointing to the clock, 'Mercy, Mr Archie!' she would say, 'whatten a time o' night is this of it! God forgive me for a daft wife!' So it befell, by good management, that she was not only the first to begin these nocturnal conversations, but invariably the first to break them off; so she managed to retire and not to be dismissed.

3 A BORDER FAMILY

Such an unequal intimacy has never been uncommon in Scotland, where the clan spirit survives; where the servant tends to spend her life in the same service, a helpmeet at first, then a tyrant, and at last a pensioner; where, besides, she is not necessarily destitute of the pride of birth, but is, perhaps, like Kirstie, a connection of her master's, and at least knows the legend of her own family, and may count kinship with some illustrious dead. For that is the mark of the Scot of all classes: that he stands in an attitude towards the past unthinkable to Englishmen, and remembers and cherishes the memory of his forebears, good or bad; and there burns alive in him a sense of identity with the dead even to the twentieth generation. No more characteristic instance could be found than in the family of Kirstie Elliott. They were all, and Kirstie the first of all, ready and eager to pour forth the particulars of their genealogy, embellished with every detail that memory had handed down or fancy fabricated; and behold! from every ramification of that tree there dangled a halter. The Elliotts themselves have had a chequered history; but these Elliotts deduced, besides, from three of the most unfortunate of the border clans – the Nicksons, the Ellwalds, and the Crozers. One ancestor after another might be seen appearing a moment out of the rain and the hill mist upon his furtive business, speeding home, perhaps, with a paltry booty of lame horses and lean kine, or squealing and dealing death in some moorland feud of the ferrets and the wild cats. One after another closed his obscure adventures in mid-air, triced up to the arm of the royal gibbet or the Baron's dule-tree. For the rusty blunderbuss of Scots criminal justice, which usually hurt nobody but

jurymen, became a weapon of precision for the Nicksons, the Ellwalds, and the Crozers. The exhilaration of their exploits seemed to haunt the memories of their descendants alone, and the shame to be forgotten. Pride glowed in their bosoms to publish their relationship to 'Andrew Ellwald of the Laverockstanes, called "Unchancy Dand," who was justifeed wi' seeven mair of the same name at Jeddart in the days of King James the Sax.' In all this tissue of crime and misfortune, the Elliotts of Cauldstaneslap had one boast which must appear legitimate: the males were gallows-birds, born outlaws, petty thieves, and deadly brawlers, but, according to the same tradition, the females were all chaste and faithful. The power of ancestry on the character is not limited to the inheritance of cells. If I buy ancestors by the gross from the benevolence of Lyon King of Arms,[3] my grandson (if he is Scottish) will feel a quickening emulation of their deeds. The men of the Elliotts were proud, lawless, violent as of right, cherishing and prolonging a tradition. In like manner with the women. And the women, essentially passionate and reckless, who crouched on the rug, in the shine of the peat fire, telling these tales, had cherished through life a wild integrity of virtue.

Her father Gilbert had been deeply pious, a savage disciplinarian in the antique style, and withal a notorious smuggler. 'I mind when I was a bairn getting mony a skelp and being shoo'd to bed like pou'try,' she would say. 'That would be when the lads and their bit kegs were on the road. We've had the riffraff of two-three counties in our kitchen, mony's the time, betwix' the twelve and the three; and their lanterns would be standing in the forecourt, ay, a score o' them at once. But there was nae ungodly talk permitted at Cauldstaneslap. My faither was a consistent man in walk and conversation; just let slip an aith, and there was the door to ye! He had that zeal for the Lord, it was a fair wonder to hear him pray, but the family has aye had a gift that way.' This father was twice married, once to a dark woman of the old Ellwald stock, by whom he had Gilbert, presently of Cauldstaneslap; and, secondly, to the mother of Kirstie. 'He was an auld man when he married her, a fell auld man wi' a muckle voice – you could hear him rowting from the top o' the Kye-skairs,' she said; 'but for her, it appears she was a perfit wonder. It was gentle blood she

had, Mr Archie, for it was your ain. The countryside gaed gyte about her and her gowden hair. Mines is no to be mentioned wi' it, and there's few weemen has mair hair than what I have, or yet a bonnier colour. Often would I tell my dear Miss Jeannie – that was your mother, dear, she was cruel ta'en up about her hair, it was unco tender, ye see – "Hoots, Miss Jeannie," I would say, "just fling your washes and your French dentifrishes in the back o' the fire, for that's the place for them; and awa' down to a burn-side, and wash yersel in cauld hill water, and dry your bonny hair in the caller wind o' the muirs, the way that my mother aye washed hers, and that I have aye made it a practice to have wishen mines – just you do what I tell ye, my dear, and ye'll give me news of it! Ye'll have hair, and routh of hair, a pigtail as thick's my arm," I said, "and the bonniest colour like the clear gowden guineas, so as the lads in kirk'll no can keep their eyes off it!" Weel, it lasted out her time, puir thing! I cuttit a lock of it upon her corp that was lying there sae cauld. I'll show it ye some of thir days if ye're good. But, as I was sayin', my mither –'

On the death of the father there remained golden-haired Kirstie, who took service with her distant kinsfolk, the Rutherfords, and black-a-vised Gilbert, twenty years older, who farmed the Cauldstaneslap, married, and begot four sons between 1773 and 1784, and a daughter, like a postscript, in '97, the year of Camperdown and Cape St Vincent.[4] It seemed it was a tradition in the family to wind up with a belated girl. In 1804, at the age of sixty, Gilbert met an end that might be called heroic. He was due home from market any time from eight at night till five in the morning, and in any condition from the quarrelsome to the speechless, for he maintained to that age the goodly customs of the Scots farmer. It was known on this occasion that he had a good bit of money to bring home; the word had gone round loosely. The laird had shown his guineas, and if anybody had but noticed it, there was an ill-looking, vagabond crew, the scum of Edinburgh, that drew out of the market long ere it was dusk and took the hill-road by Hermiston, where it was not to be believed that they had lawful business. One of the countryside, one Dickieson, they took with them to be their guide, and dear he paid for it! Of a sudden in the ford of the Brocken Dykes, this vermin clan fell on the laird, six to

one, and him three parts asleep, having drunk hard. But it is ill to catch an Elliott. For a while, in the night and the black water that was deep as to his saddle-girths, he wrought with his staff like a smith at his stithy, and great was the sound of oaths and blows. With that the ambuscade was burst, and he rode for home with a pistol-ball in him, three knife wounds, the loss of his front teeth, a broken rib and bridle, and a dying horse. That was a race with death that the laird rode! In the mirk night, with his broken bridle and his head swimming, he dug his spurs to the rowels in the horse's side, and the horse, that was even worse off than himself, the poor creature! screamed out loud like a person as he went, so that the hills echoed with it, and the folks at Cauldstaneslap got to their feet about the table and looked at each other with white faces. The horse fell dead at the yard gate, the laird won the length of the house and fell there on the threshold. To the son that raised him he gave the bag of money. 'Hae,' said he. All the way up the thieves had seemed to him to be at his heels, but now the hallucination left him – he saw them again in the place of the ambuscade – and the thirst of vengeance seized on his dying mind. Raising himself and pointing with an imperious finger into the black night from which he had come, he uttered the single command, 'Brocken Dykes,' and fainted. He had never been loved, but he had been feared in honour. At that sight, at that word, gasped out at them from a toothless and bleeding mouth, the old Elliott spirit awoke with a shout in the four sons. 'Wanting the hat,' continues my author, Kirstie, whom I but haltingly follow, for she told this tale like one inspired, 'wanting guns, for there wasna twa grains o' pouder in the house, wi' nae mair weepons than their sticks into their hands, the fower o' them took the road. Only Hob, and that was the eldest, hunkered at the doorsill where the blood had rin, fyled his hand wi' it, and haddit it up to Heeven in the way o' the auld Border aith. "Hell shall have her ain again this nicht!" he raired, and rode forth upon his earrand.' It was three miles to Brocken Dykes, down hill, and a sore road. Kirstie has seen men from Edinburgh dismounting there in plain day to lead their horses. But the four brothers rode it as if Auld Hornie were behind and Heaven in front. Come to the ford, and there was Dickieson. By all tales, he was not dead, but breathed and reared upon his

elbow, and cried out to them for help. It was at a graceless face that he asked mercy. As soon as Hob saw, by the glint of the lantern, the eyes shining and the whiteness of the teeth in the man's face, 'Damn you!' says he; 'ye hae your teeth, hae ye?' and rode his horse to and fro upon that human remnant. Beyond that, Dandie must dismount with the lantern to be their guide; he was the youngest son, scarce twenty at the time. 'A' nicht long they gaed in the wet heath and jennipers, and whaur they gaed they neither knew nor cared, but just followed the bluid stains and the footprints o' their faither's murderers. And a' nicht Dandie had his nose to the grund like a tyke, and the ithers followed and spak' naething, neither black nor white. There was nae noise to be heard, but just the sough of the swalled burns, and Hob, the dour yin, risping his teeth as he gaed.' With the first glint of the morning they saw they were on the drove road, and at that the four stopped and had a dram to their breakfasts, for they knew that Dand must have guided them right, and the rogues could be but little ahead, hot foot for Edinburgh by the way of the Pentland Hills. By eight o'clock they had word of them – a shepherd had seen four men 'uncoly mishandled' go by in the last hour. 'That's yin a piece,' says Clem, and swung his cudgel. 'Five o' them!' says Hob. 'God's death, but the faither was a man! And him drunk!' And then there befell them what my author termed 'a sair misbegowk,' for they were overtaken by a posse of mounted neighbours come to aid in the pursuit. Four sour faces looked on the reinforcement. 'The deil's broughten you!' said Clem, and they rode thenceforward in the rear of the party with hanging heads. Before ten they had found and secured the rogues, and by three of the afternoon, as they rode up the Vennel with their prisoners, they were aware of a concourse of people bearing in their midst something that dripped. 'For the boady of the saxt,' pursued Kirstie, 'wi' his head smashed like a hazel-nit, had been a' that nicht in the chairge o' Hermiston Water, and it dunting it on the stanes, and grunding it on the shallows, and flinging the deid thing heels-ower-hurdie at the Fa's o' Spango; and in the first o' the day Tweed had got a hold o' him and carried him off like a wind, for it was uncoly swalled, and raced wi' him, bobbing under brae-sides, and was long playing with the creature in the drumlie lynns under the castle, and at

the hinder end of all cuist him up on the starling of Crossmichael brig. Sae there they were a' thegither at last (for Dickieson had been brought in on a cart long syne), and folk could see what mainner o' man my brither had been that had held his head again' sax and saved the siller, and him drunk!' Thus died of honourable injuries and in the savour of fame Gilbert Elliott of the Cauldstaneslap; but his sons had scarce less glory out of the business. Their savage haste, the skill with which Dand had found and followed the trail, the barbarity to the wounded Dickieson (which was like an open secret in the county), and the doom which it was currently supposed they had intended for the others, struck and stirred popular imagination. Some century earlier the last of the minstrels might have fashioned the last of the ballads out of that Homeric fight and chase; but the spirit was dead, or had been reincarnated already in Mr Sheriff Scott, and the degenerate moorsmen must be content to tell the tale in prose and to make of the 'Four Black Brothers' a unit after the fashion of the 'Twelve Apostles' or the 'Three Musketeers.'

Robert, Gilbert, Clement, and Andrew – in the proper Border diminutives Hob, Gib, Clem, and Dand Elliott – these ballad heroes, had much in common; in particular, their high sense of the family and the family honour; but they went diverse ways, and prospered and failed in different businesses. According to Kirstie, 'they had a' bees in their bonnets but Hob.' Hob the laird was, indeed, essentially a decent man. An elder of the Kirk, nobody had heard an oath upon his lips, save, perhaps, thrice or so at the sheep-washing, since the chase of his father's murderers. The figure he had shown on that eventful night disappeared as if swallowed by a trap. He who had ecstatically dipped his hand in the red blood, he who had ridden down Dickieson, became, from that moment on, a stiff and rather graceless model of the rustic proprieties; cannily profiting by the high war prices, and yearly stowing away a little nest-egg in the bank against calamity; approved of and sometimes consulted by the greater lairds for the massive and placid sense of what he said, when he could be induced to say anything; and particularly valued by the minister, Mr Torrance, as a right-hand man in the parish, and a model to parents. The transfiguration had been for the moment only; some Bar-

barossa,[5] some old Adam of our ancestors, sleeps in all of us till the fit circumstance shall call it into action; and for as sober as he now seemed, Hob had given once for all the measure of the devil that haunted him. He was married, and, by reason of the effulgence of that legendary night, was adored by his wife. He had a mob of little lusty, barefoot children who marched in a caravan the long miles to school, the stages of whose pilgrimage were marked by acts of spoliation and mischief, and who were qualified in the countryside as 'fair pests.' But in the house, if 'faither was in,' they were quiet as mice. In short, Hob moved through life in a great peace – the reward of any one who shall have killed his man, with any formidable and figurative circumstance, in the midst of a country gagged and swaddled with civilisation.

It was a current remark that the Elliotts were 'guid and bad, like sanguishes';[6] and certainly there was a curious distinction, the men of business coming alternately with the dreamers. The second brother, Gib, was a weaver by trade, had gone out early into the world to Edinburgh, and come home again with his wings singed. There was an exaltation in his nature which had led him to embrace with enthusiasm the principles of the French Revolution, and had ended by bringing him under the hawse of my Lord Hermiston in that furious onslaught of his upon the Liberals, which sent Muir and Palmer[7] into exile and dashed the party into chaff. It was whispered that my lord, in his great scorn for the movement and prevailed upon a little by a sense of neighbourliness, had given Gib a hint. Meeting him one day in the Potter-row, my lord had stopped in front of him. 'Gib, ye eediot,' he had said, 'what's this I hear of you? Poalitics, poalitics, poalitics, weaver's poalitics, is the way of it, I hear. If ye arena a' thegither dozened with eediocy, ye'll gang your ways back to Cauldstaneslap, and ca' your loom, and ca' your loom, man!' And Gilbert had taken him at the word and returned, with an expedition almost to be called flight, to the house of his father. The clearest of his inheritance was that family gift of prayer of which Kirstie had boasted; and the baffled politician now turned his attention to religious matters – or, as others said, to heresy and schism. Every Sunday morning he was in Crossmichael, where he had gathered together, one by one, a

sect of about a dozen persons, who called themselves 'God's Remnant of the True Faithful,' or, for short, 'God's Remnant.' To the profane, they were known as 'Gib's Deils.' Bailie Tweedie, a noted humorist in the town, vowed that the proceedings always opened to the tune of 'The Deil Fly Away with the Exciseman,' and that the sacrament was dispensed in the form of hot whisky-toddy; both wicked hits at the evangelist, who had been suspected of smuggling in his youth, and had been overtaken (as the phrase went) on the streets of Cross-michael one Fair day. It was known that every Sunday they prayed for a blessing on the arms of Bonaparte. For this, 'God's Remnant,' as they were 'skailing' from the cottage that did duty for a temple, had been repeatedly stoned by the bairns, and Gib himself hooted by a squadron of Border volunteers in which his own brother, Dand, rode in a uniform and with a drawn sword. The 'Remnant' were believed, besides, to be 'antinomian in principle,'[8] which might otherwise have been a serious charge, but the way public opinion then blew it was quite swallowed up and forgotten in the scandal about Bonaparte. For the rest, Gilbert had set up his loom in an outhouse at Cauldstaneslap, where he laboured assiduously six days of the week. His brothers, appalled by his political opinions, and willing to avoid dissension in the household, spoke but little to him; he less to them, remaining absorbed in the study of the Bible and almost constant prayer. The gaunt weaver was dry-nurse at Cauldstaneslap, and the bairns loved him dearly. Except when he was carrying an infant in his arms, he was rarely seen to smile – as, indeed, there were few smilers in that family. When his sister-in-law rallied him, and proposed that he should get a wife and bairns of his own, since he was so fond of them, 'I have no clearness of mind upon that point,' he would reply. If nobody called him in to dinner, he stayed out. Mrs Hob, a hard, unsympathetic woman, once tried the experiment. He went without food all day, but at dusk, as the light began to fail him, he came into the house of his own accord, looking puzzled. 'I've had a great gale of prayer upon my speerit,' said he. 'I canna mind sae muckle's what I had for dennèr.' The creed of God's Remnant was justified in the life of its founder. 'And yet I dinna ken,' said Kirstie. 'He's maybe no more stockfish than his neeghbours! He rode wi' the rest o' them, and had a

good stamach to the work, by a' that I hear! God's Remnant! The deil's clavers! There wasna muckle Christianity in the way Hob guided Johnny Dickieson, at the least of it; but Guid kens! Is he a Christian even? He might be a Mahommedan or a Deevil or a Fire-worshipper, for what I ken.'

The third brother had his name on a door-plate, no less, in the city of Glasgow, 'Mr Clement Elliott,' as long as your arm. In his case, that spirit of innovation which had shown itself timidly in the case of Hob by the admission of new manures, and which had run to waste with Gilbert in subversive politics and heretical religions, bore useful fruit in many ingenious mechanical improvements. In boyhood, from his addiction to strange devices of sticks and string, he had been counted the most eccentric of the family. But that was all by now; and he was a partner of his firm, and looked to die a bailie. He too had married, and was rearing a plentiful family in the smoke and din of Glasgow; he was wealthy, and could have bought out his brother, the cock-laird, six times over, it was whispered; and when he slipped away to Cauldstaneslap for a well-earned holiday, which he did as often as he was able, he astonished the neighbours with his broadcloth, his beaver hat, and the ample plies of his neck-cloth. Though an eminently solid man at bottom, after the pattern of Hob, he had contracted a certain Glasgow briskness and *aplomb* which set him off. All the other Elliotts were as lean as a rake, but Clement was laying on fat, and he panted sorely when he must get into his boots. Dand said, chuckling: 'Ay, Clem has the elements of a corporation.' 'A provost and corporation,' returned Clem. And his readiness was much admired.

The fourth brother, Dand, was a shepherd to his trade, and by starts, when he could bring his mind to it, excelled in the business. Nobody could train a dog like Dandie; nobody, through the peril of great storms in the winter time, could do more gallantly. But if his dexterity were exquisite, his diligence was but fitful; and he served his brother for bed and board, and a trifle of pocket-money when he asked for it. He loved money well enough, knew very well how to spend it, and could make a shrewd bargain when he liked. But he preferred a vague knowledge that he was well to windward to any

counted coins in the pocket; he felt himself richer so. Hob would expostulate. 'I'm an amature herd,' Dand would reply: 'I'll keep your sheep to you when I'm so minded, but I'll keep my liberty, too. Thir's no man can coandescend on what I'm worth.' Clem would expound to him the miraculous results of compound interest, and recommend investments. 'Ay, man?' Dand would say, 'and do you think, if I took Hob's siller, that I wouldna drink it or wear it on the lassies? And, anyway, my kingdom is no of this world. Either I'm a poet or else I'm nothing.' Clem would remind him of old age. 'I'll die young, like Robbie Burns,' he would say stoutly. No question but he had a certain accomplishment in minor verse. His 'Hermiston Burn,' with its pretty refrain –

> I love to gang thinking whaur ye gang linking,
> Hermiston burn, in the howe;

his 'Auld, auld Elliotts, clay-cauld Elliotts, dour, bauld Elliotts of auld,' and his really fascinating piece about the Praying Weaver's Stone, had gained him in the neighbourhood the reputation, still possible in Scotland, of a local bard; and, though not printed himself, he was recognised by others who were and who had become famous. Walter Scott owed to Dandie the text of the 'Raid of Wearie' in the *Minstrelsy* and made him welcome at his house, and appreciated his talents, such as they were, with all his usual generosity. The Ettrick Shepherd[9] was his sworn crony; they would meet, drink to excess, roar out their lyrics in each other's faces, and quarrel and make up again till bedtime. And besides these recognitions, almost to be called official, Dandie was made welcome for the sake of his gift through the farmhouses of several contiguous dales, and was thus exposed to manifold temptations which he rather sought than fled. He had figured on the stool of repentance,[10] for once fulfilling to the letter the tradition of his hero and model. His humorous verses to Mr Torrance on that occasion – 'Kenspeckle here my lane I stand' – unfortunately too indelicate for further citation, ran through the country like a fiery cross; they were recited, quoted, paraphrased and laughed over as far away as Dumfries on the one hand and Dunbar on the other.

These four brothers were united by a close bond, the bond of that

mutual admiration – or rather mutual hero-worship – which is so strong among the members of secluded families who have much ability and little culture. Even the extremes admired each other. Hob, who had as much poetry as the tongs, professed to find pleasure in Dand's verses; Clem, who had no more religion than Claverhouse, nourished a heartfelt, at least an open-mouthed, admiration of Gib's prayers; and Dandie followed with relish the rise of Clem's fortunes. Indulgence followed hard on the heels of admiration. The laird, Clem, and Dand, who were Tories and patriots of the hottest quality, excused to themselves, with a certain bashfulness, the radical and revolutionary heresies of Gib. By another division of the family, the laird, Clem, and Gib, who were men exactly virtuous, swallowed the dose of Dand's irregularities as a kind of clog or drawback in the mysterious providence of God affixed to bards, and distinctly probative of poetical genius. To appreciate the simplicity of their mutual admiration, it was necessary to hear Clem, arrived upon one of his visits, and dealing in a spirit of continuous irony with the affairs and personalities of that great city of Glasgow where he lived and transacted business. The various personages, ministers of the church, municipal officers, mercantile big-wigs, whom he had occasion to introduce, were all alike denigrated, all served but as reflectors to cast back a flattering side-light on the house of Cauldstaneslap. The Provost, for whom Clem by exception entertained a measure of respect, he would liken to Hob. 'He minds me o' the laird there,' he would say. 'He has some of Hob's grand, whunstane sense, and the same way with him of steiking his mouth when he's no very pleased.' And Hob, all unconscious, would draw down his upper lip and produce, as if for comparison, the formidable grimace referred to. The unsatisfactory incumbent of St Enoch's Kirk was thus briefly dismissed: 'If he had but twa fingers o' Gib's he would waken them up.' And Gib, honest man! would look down and secretly smile. Clem was a spy whom they had sent out into the world of men. He had come back with the good news that there was nobody to compare with the Four Black Brothers, no position that they would not adorn, no official that it would not be well they should replace, no interest of mankind, secular or spiritual, which would not immediately bloom under their supervision. The

excuse of their folly is in two words: scarce the breadth of a hair divided them from the peasantry. The measure of their sense is this: that these symposia of rustic vanity were kept entirely within the family, like some secret ancestral practice. To the world their serious faces were never deformed by the suspicion of any simper of self-contentment. Yet it was known. 'They hae a guid pride o' themsels!' was the word in the countryside.

Lastly, in a Border story, there should be added their 'to-names.' Hob was The Laird. '*Roy ne puis, prince ne daigne*';[11] he was The Laird of Cauldstaneslap – say fifty acres – *ipsissimus.*[12] Clement was Mr Elliott, as upon his door-plate, the earlier Dafty having been discarded as no longer applicable, and indeed only a reminder of misjudgment and the imbecility of the public; and the youngest, in honour of his perpetual wanderings, was known by the sobriquet of Randy Dand.

It will be understood that not all this information was communicated by the aunt, who had too much of the family failing herself to appreciate it thoroughly in others. But as time went on, Archie began to observe an omission in the family chronicle.

'Is there not a girl too?' he asked.

'Ay: Kirstie. She was named from me, or my grandmother at least – it's the same thing,' returned the aunt, and went on again about Dand, whom she secretly preferred by reason of his gallantries.

'But what is your niece like?' said Archie at the next opportunity.

'Her? As black's your hat! But I dinna suppose she would maybe be what you would ca' *ill-looked* a' thegither. Na, she's a kind of a handsome jaud – a kind o' gipsy,' said the aunt, who had two sets of scales for men and women – or perhaps it would be more fair to say that she had three, and the third and the most loaded was for girls.

'How comes it that I never see her in church?' said Archie.

''Deed, and I believe she's in Glesgie with Clem and his wife. A heap good she's like to get of it! I dinna say for men folk, but where weemen folk are born, there let them bide. Glory to God, I was never far'er from here than Crossmichael.'

In the meanwhile it began to strike Archie as strange, that while she thus sang the praises of her kinsfolk, and manifestly relished their virtues and (I may say) their vices like a thing creditable to herself, there

should appear not the least sign of cordiality between the house of Hermiston and that of Cauldstaneslap. Going to church of a Sunday, as the lady housekeeper stepped with her skirts kilted, three tucks of her white petticoat showing below, and her best India shawl upon her back (if the day were fine) in a pattern of radiant dyes, she would sometimes overtake her relatives preceding her more leisurely in the same direction. Gib of course was absent: by skreigh of day he had been gone to Crossmichael and his fellow heretics; but the rest of the family would be seen marching in open order: Hob and Dand, stiff-necked, straight-backed six-footers, with severe dark faces, and their plaids about their shoulders; the convoy of children scattering (in a state of high polish) on the wayside, and every now and again collected by the shrill summons of the mother; and the mother herself, by a suggestive circumstance which might have afforded matter of thought to a more experienced observer than Archie, wrapped in a shawl nearly identical with Kirstie's but a thought more gaudy and conspicuously newer. At the sight, Kirstie grew more tall – Kirstie showed her classical profile, nose in air and nostril spread, the pure blood came in her cheek evenly in a delicate living pink.

'A braw day to ye, Mistress Elliott,' said she, and hostility and gentility were nicely mingled in her tones. 'A fine day, mem,' the laird's wife would reply with a miraculous curtsey, spreading the while her plumage – setting off, in other words, and with arts unknown to the mere man, the pattern of her India shawl. Behind her, the whole Cauldstaneslap contingent marched in closer order, and with an indescribable air of being in the presence of the foe; and while Dandie saluted his aunt with a certain familiarity as of one who was well in court, Hob marched on in awful immobility. There appeared upon the face of this attitude in the family the consequences of some dreadful feud. Presumably the two women had been principals in the original encounter, and the laird had probably been drawn into the quarrel by the ears, too late to be included in the present skin-deep reconciliation.

'Kirstie,' said Archie one day, 'what is this you have against your family?'

'I dinna complean,' said Kirstie, with a flush. 'I say naething.'

'I see you do not – not even good-day to your own nephew,' said he.

'I hae naething to be ashamed of,' said she. 'I can say the Lord's Prayer with a good grace. If Hob was ill, or in preeson or poverty, I would see to him blithely. But for curtchying and complimenting and colloguing, thank ye kindly!'

Archie had a bit of a smile: he leaned back in his chair. 'I think you and Mrs Robert are not very good friends,' said he slyly, 'when you have your India shawls on?'

She looked upon him in silence, with a sparkling eye but an indecipherable expression; and that was all that Archie was ever destined to learn of the battle of the India shawls.

'Do none of them ever come here to see you?' he inquired.

'Mr Archie,' said she, 'I hope that I ken my place better. It would be a queer thing, I think, if I was to clamjamfry up your faither's house – that I should say it! – wi' a dirty, black-a-vised clan, no ane o' them it was worth while to mar soap upon but just mysel! Na, they're all damnifeed wi' the black Ellwalds. I have nae patience wi' black folk.' Then, with a sudden consciousness of the case of Archie, 'No that it maitters for men sae muckle,' she made haste to add, 'but there's nae-body can deny that it's unwomanly. Long hair is the ornament o' woman ony way; we've good warrandise for that – it's in the Bible – and wha can doubt that the Apostle had some gowden-haired lassie in his mind – Apostle and all, for what was he but just a man like yersel?'

CHAPTER VI

A LEAF FROM CHRISTINA'S PSALM-BOOK

Archie was sedulous at church. Sunday after Sunday he sat down and stood up with that small company, heard the voice of Mr Torrance leaping like an ill-played clarionet from key to key, and had an opportunity to study his moth-eaten gown and the black thread mittens that he joined together in prayer, and lifted up with a reverent solemnity in the act of benediction. Hermiston pew was a little square box, dwarfish in a proportion with the kirk itself, and enclosing a table not much bigger than a footstool. There sat Archie, an apparent prince, the only undeniable gentleman and the only great heritor in the parish, taking his ease in the only pew, for no other in the kirk had doors. Thence he might command an undisturbed view of that congregation of solid plaided men, strapping wives and daughters, oppressed children, and uneasy sheep-dogs. It was strange how Archie missed the look of race; except the dogs, with their refined foxy faces and inimitably curling tails, there was no one present with the least claim to gentility. The Cauldstaneslap party was scarcely an exception; Dandie perhaps, as he amused himself making verses through the interminable burden of the service, stood out a little by the glow in his eye and a certain superior animation of face and alertness of body; but even Dandie slouched like a rustic. The rest of the congregation, like so many sheep, oppressed him with a sense of hob-nailed routine, day following day – of physical labour in the open air, oatmeal porridge, peas bannock, the somnolent fireside in the evening, and the night-long nasal slumbers in a box-bed. Yet he knew many of them to be shrewd and humorous, men of character, notable women, making a bustle in the world and radiating an influence from their low-browed doors. He knew besides they were like other men; below

the crust of custom, rapture found a way; he had heard them beat the timbrel before Bacchus – had heard them shout and carouse over their whisky-toddy; and not the most Dutch-bottomed and severe faces among them all, not even the solemn elders themselves, but were capable of singular gambols at the voice of love. Men drawing near to an end of life's adventurous journey – màids thrilling with fear and curiosity on the threshold of entrance – women who had borne and perhaps buried children, who could remember the clinging of the small dead hands and the patter of the little feet now silent – he marvelled that among all those faces there should be no face of expectation, none that was mobile, none into which the rhythm and poetry of life had entered. 'O for a live face,' he thought; and at times he had a memory of Lady Flora; and at times he would study the living gallery before him with despair, and would see himself go on to waste his days in that joyless pastoral place, and death come to him, and his grave be dug under the rowans, and the Spirit of the Earth laugh out in a thunder-peal at the huge fiasco.

On this particular Sunday, there was no doubt but that the spring had come at last. It was warm, with a latent shiver in the air that made the warmth only the more welcome. The shallows of the stream glittered and tinkled among bunches of primrose. Vagrant scents of the earth arrested Archie by the way with moments of ethereal intoxication. The grey, Quakerish dale was still only awakened in places and patches from the sobriety of its wintry colouring; and he wondered at its beauty; an essential beauty of the old earth it seemed to him, not resident in particulars but breathing to him from the whole. He surprised himself by a sudden impulse to write poetry – he did so sometimes, loose, galloping octosyllabics in the vein of Scott – and when he had taken his place on a boulder, near some fairy falls and shaded by a whip of a tree that was already radiant with new leaves, it still more surprised him that he should find nothing to write. His heart perhaps beat in time to some vast in-dwelling rhythm of the universe. By the time he came to a corner of the valley and could see the kirk, he had so lingered by the way that the first psalm was finishing. The nasal psalmody, full of turns and trills and graceless graces, seemed the essential voice of the kirk itself upraised in thanks-

giving. 'Everything's alive,' he said; and again cried it aloud, 'Thank God, everything's alive!' He lingered yet a while in the kirkyard. A tuft of primroses was blooming hard by the leg of an old, black table tombstone, and he stopped to contemplate the random apologue. They stood forth on the cold earth with a trenchancy of contrast; and he was struck with a sense of incompleteness in the day, the season, and the beauty that surrounded him – the chill there was in the warmth, the gross black clods about the opening primroses, the damp earthy smell that was everywhere intermingled with the scents. The voice of the aged Torrance within rose in an ecstasy. And he wondered if Torrance also felt in his old bones the joyous influence of the spring morning; Torrance, or the shadow of what once was Torrance, that must come so soon to lie outside here in the sun and rain with all his rheumatisms, while a new minister stood in his room and thundered from his own familiar pulpit? The pity of it, and something of the chill of the grave, shook him for a moment as he made haste to enter.

He went up the aisle reverently and took his place in the pew with lowered eyes, for he feared he had already offended the kind old gentleman in the pulpit, and was sedulous to offend no further. He could not follow the prayer, not even the heads of it. Brightnesses of azure, clouds of fragrance, a tinkle of falling water and singing birds, rose like exhalations from some deeper, aboriginal memory, that was not his, but belonged to the flesh on his bones. His body remembered; and it seemed to him that his body was in no way gross, but ethereal and perishable like a strain of music; and he felt for it an exquisite tenderness as for a child, an innocent, full of beautiful instincts and destined to an early death. And he felt for old Torrance – of the many supplications, of the few days – a pity that was near to tears. The prayer ended. Right over him was a tablet in the wall, the only ornament in the roughly masoned chapel – for it was no more; the tablet commemorated, I was about to say the virtues, but rather the existence of a former Rutherford of Hermiston; and Archie, under that trophy of his long descent and local greatness, leaned back in the pew and contemplated vacancy with the shadow of a smile between playful and sad, that became him strangely. Dandie's sister, sitting by the

side of Clem in her new Glasgow finery, chose that moment to observe the young laird. Aware of the stir of his entrance, the little formalist had kept her eyes fastened and her face prettily composed during the prayer. It was not hypocrisy, there was no one further from a hypocrite. The girl had been taught to behave: to look up, to look down, to look unconscious, to look seriously impressed in church, and in every conjuncture to look her best. That was the game of female life, and she played it frankly. Archie was the one person in church who was of interest, who was somebody new, reputed eccentric, known to be young, and a laird, and still unseen by Christina. Small wonder that, as she stood there in her attitude of pretty decency, her mind should run upon him! If he spared a glance in her direction, he should know she was a well-behaved young lady who had been to Glasgow. In reason he must admire her clothes, and it was possible that he should think her pretty. At that her heart beat the least thing in the world; and she proceeded, by way of a corrective, to call up and dismiss a series of fancied pictures of the young man who should now, by rights, be looking at her. She settled on the plainest of them, a pink short young man with a dish face and no figure, at whose admiration she could afford to smile; but for all that, the consciousness of his gaze (which was really fixed on Torrance and his mittens) kept her in something of a flutter till the word Amen. Even then, she was far too well-bred to gratify her curiosity with any impatience. She resumed her seat languidly – this was a Glasgow touch – she composed her dress, rearranged her nosegay of primroses, looked first in front, then behind upon the other side, and at last allowed her eyes to move, without hurry, and with perfect haughty unconsciousness,[1] in the direction of the Hermiston pew. For a moment, they were riveted. Next she had plucked her gaze home again like a tame bird who should have meditated flight. Possibilities crowded on her; she hung over the future and grew dizzy; the image of this young man, slim, graceful, dark, with the inscrutable half-smile, attracted and repelled her like a chasm. 'I wonder, will I have met my fate?' she thought, and her heart swelled.

Torrance was got some way into his first exposition, positing a deep layer of texts as he went along, laying the foundations of his dis-

course, which was to deal with a nice point in divinity, before Archie suffered his eyes to wander. They fell first of all on Clem, looking insupportably prosperous, and patronising Torrance with the favour of a modified attention, as of one who was used to better things in Glasgow. Though he had never before set eyes on him, Archie had no difficulty in identifying him, and no hesitation in pronouncing him vulgar, the worst of the family. Clem was leaning lazily forward when Archie first saw him. Presently he leaned nonchalantly back; and that deadly instrument, the maiden, was suddenly unmasked in profile. Though not quite in the front of the fashion (had anybody cared!), certain artful Glasgow mantua-makers, and her own inherent taste, had arrayed her to great advantage. Her accoutrement was, indeed, a cause of heart-burning, and almost of scandal, in that infinitesimal kirk company. Mrs Hob had said her say at Cauldstaneslap. 'Daft-like!' she had pronounced it. 'A jaiket that'll no meet! Whaur's the sense of a jaiket that'll no button upon ye, if it should come to be weet? What do ye ca' thir things? Demmy brokens, d'ye say? They'll be brokens wi' a vengeance or ye can win back! Weel, I have naething to do wi' it – it's no good taste.' Clem, whose purse had thus metamorphosed his sister, and who was not insensible to the advertisement, had come to the rescue with a 'Hoot, woman! What do you ken of good taste that has never been to the ceety?' And Hob, looking on the girl with pleased smiles, as she timidly displayed her finery in the midst of the dark kitchen, had thus ended the dispute: 'The cutty looks weel,' he had said, 'and it's no very like rain. Wear them the day, hizzie; but it's no a thing to make a practice o'.' In the breasts of her rivals, coming to the kirk very conscious of white underlinen, and their faces splendid with much soap, the sight of the toilet had raised a storm of varying emotion, from the mere unenvious admiration that was expressed in a long-drawn 'Eh!' to the angrier feeling that found vent in an emphatic 'Set her up!' Her frock was of straw-coloured jaconet muslin, cut low at the bosom and short at the ankle, so as to display her *demi-broquins* of Regency violet, crossing with many straps upon a yellow cobweb stocking. According to the pretty fashion in which our grandmothers did not hesitate to appear, and our great-aunts went forth armed for the pursuit and capture of our

great-uncles, the dress was drawn up so as to mould the contour of both breasts, and in the nook between a cairngorm brooch maintained it. Here, too, surely in a very enviable position, trembled the nosegay of primroses.[2] She wore on her shoulders – or rather, on her back and not her shoulders, which it scarcely passed – a French coat of sarsenet, tied in front with Margate braces, and of the same colour with her violet shoes. About her face clustered a disorder of dark ringlets, a little garland of yellow French roses surmounted her brow, and the whole was crowned by a village hat of chipped straw. Amongst all the rosy and all the weathered faces that surrounded her in church, she glowed like an open flower – girl and raiment, and the cairngorm that caught the daylight and returned it in a fiery flash, and the threads of bronze and gold that made her hair precious, like a bed of tiger lilies[3] in a country garden.

Archie was attracted by the bright thing like a child. He looked at her again and yet again, and their looks crossed. The lip was lifted from her little teeth. He saw the red blood work vividly under her tawny skin. Her eye, which was great as a stag's, struck and held his gaze. He knew who she must be – Kirstie, she of the harsh diminutive, his housekeeper's niece, the sister of the rustic prophet, Gib – and he found in her the answer to his wishes.

Christina felt the shock of their encountering glances, and seemed to rise, clothed in smiles, into a region of the vague and bright. But the gratification was not more exquisite than it was brief. She looked away abruptly, and immediately began to blame herself for that abruptness. She knew what she should have done, too late – turned slowly with her nose in the air. And meantime his look was not removed, but continued to play upon her like a battery of cannon constantly aimed, and now seemed to isolate her alone with him, and now seemed to uplift her, as on a pillory, before the congregation. For Archie continued to drink her in with his eyes, even as a wayfarer comes to a well-head on a mountain, and stoops his face, and drinks with thirst unassuageable. In the cleft of her little breasts the fiery eye of the topaz and the pale florets of primrose fascinated him. He saw the breasts heave, and the flowers shake with the heaving, and marvelled what should so much discompose the girl. And Christina was

conscious of his gaze – saw it, perhaps, with the dainty plaything of an ear that peeped among her ringlets; she was conscious of changing colour, conscious of her unsteady breath. Like a creature tracked, run down, surrounded, she sought in a dozen ways to give herself a countenance. She used her handkerchief – it was a really fine one – then she desisted in a panic: 'He would only think I was too warm.' She took to reading in the metrical psalms, and then remembered it was sermon-time. Last she put a 'sugar-bool' in her mouth, and the next moment repented of the step. It was such a homely-like thing! Mr Archie would never be eating sweeties in kirk; and, with a palpable effort, she swallowed it whole, and her colour flamed high. At this signal of distress Archie awoke to a sense of his ill-behaviour. What had he been doing? He had been exquisitely rude in church to the niece of his housekeeper; he had stared like a lackey and a libertine at a beautiful and modest girl. It was possible, it was even likely, he would be presented to her after service in the kirkyard, and then how was he to look? And there was no excuse. He had marked the tokens of her shame, of her increasing indignation, and he was such a fool that he had not understood them. Shame bowed him down, and he looked resolutely at Mr Torrance, who little supposed, good, worthy man, as he continued to expound justification by faith, what was his true business: to play the part of derivative to a pair of children at the old game of falling in love.

Christina was greatly relieved at first. It seemed to her that she was clothed again. She looked back on what had passed. All would have been right if she had not blushed, a silly fool! There was nothing to blush at, if she *had* taken a sugar-bool. Mrs MacTaggart, the elder's wife in St Enoch's, took them often. And if he had looked at her, what was more natural than that a young gentleman should look at the best-dressed girl in church? And at the same time, she knew far otherwise; she knew there was nothing casual or ordinary in the look, and valued herself on its memory like a decoration. Well, it was a blessing he had found something else to look at! And presently she began to have other thoughts. It was necessary, she fancied, that she should put herself right by a repetition of the incident, better managed. If the wish was father to the thought, she did not know or she

would not recognise it. It was simply as a manoeuvre of propriety, as something called for to lessen the significance of what had gone before, that she should a second time meet his eyes, and this time without blushing. And at the memory of the blush, she blushed again, and became one general blush burning from head to foot. Was ever anything so indelicate, so forward, done by a girl before? And here she was, making an exhibition of herself before the congregation about nothing! She stole a glance upon her neighbours, and behold! they were steadily indifferent, and Clem had gone to sleep. And still the one idea was becoming more and more potent with her, that in common prudence she must look again before the service ended. Something of the same sort was going forward in the mind of Archie, as he struggled with the load of penitence. So it chanced that, in the flutter of the moment when the last psalm was given out, and Torrance was reading the verse, and the leaves of every psalm-book in church were rustling under busy fingers, two stealthy glances were sent out like antennae among the pews and on the indifferent and absorbed occupants, and drew timidly nearer to the straight line between Archie and Christina. They met, they lingered together for the least fraction of time, and that was enough. A charge as of electricity passed through Christina, and behold! the leaf of her psalm-book was torn across.

Archie was outside by the gate of the graveyard, conversing with Hob and the minister and shaking hands all round with the scattering congregation, when Clem and Christina were brought up to be presented. The laird took off his hat and bowed to her with grace and respect. Christina made her Glasgow curtsey to the laird, and went on again up the road for Hermiston and Cauldstaneslap, walking fast, breathing hurriedly with a heightened colour, and in this strange frame of mind, that when she was alone she seemed in high happiness, and when any one addressed her she resented it like a contradiction. A part of the way she had the company of some neighbour girls and a loutish young man; never had they seemed so insipid, never had she made herself so disagreeable. But these struck aside to their various destinations or were out-walked and left behind; and when she had driven off with sharp words the proffered convoy of some of her

nephews and nieces, she was free to go on alone up Hermiston brae, walking on air, dwelling intoxicated among clouds of happiness. Near to the summit she heard steps behind her, a man's steps, light and very rapid. She knew the foot at once and walked the faster. 'If it's me he's wanting, he can run for it,' she thought, smiling.

Archie overtook her like a man whose mind was made up.

'Miss Kirstie,' he began.

'Miss Christina, if you please, Mr Weir,' she interrupted. 'I canna bear the contraction.'

'You forget it has a friendly sound for me. Your aunt is an old friend of mine, and a very good one. I hope we shall see much of you at Hermiston?'

'My aunt and my sister-in-law doesna agree very well. Not that I have much ado with it. But still when I'm stopping in the house, if I was to be visiting my aunt, it would not look considerate-like.'

'I am sorry,' said Archie.

'I thank you kindly, Mr Weir,' she said. 'I whiles think myself it's a great peety.'

'Ah, I am sure your voice would always be for peace!' he cried.

'I wouldna be too sure of that,' she said. 'I have my days like other folk, I suppose.'

'Do you know, in our old kirk, among our good old grey dames, you made an effect like sunshine.'

'Ah, but that would be my Glasgow clothes!'

'I did not think I was so much under the influence of pretty frocks.'

She smiled with a half look at him. 'There's more than you!' she said. 'But you see I'm only Cinderella. I'll have to put all these things by in my trunk; next Sunday I'll be as grey as the rest. They're Glasgow clothes, you see, and it would never do to make a practice of it. It would seem terrible conspicuous.'

By that they were come to the place where their ways severed. The old grey moors were all about them; in the midst a few sheep wandered; and they could see on the one hand the straggling caravan scaling the braes in front of them for Cauldstaneslap, and on the other the contingent from Hermiston bending off and beginning to disappear by detachments into the policy gate. It was in these

circumstances that they turned to say farewell, and deliberately exchanged a glance as they shook hands. All passed as it should, genteelly; and in Christina's mind, as she mounted the first steep ascent for Cauldstaneslap, a gratifying sense of triumph prevailed over the recollection of minor lapses and mistakes. She had kilted her gown, as she did usually at that rugged pass; but when she spied Archie still standing and gazing after her, the skirts came down again as if by enchantment. Here was a piece of nicety for that upland parish, where the matrons marched with their coats kilted in the rain, and the lassies walked barefoot to kirk through the dust of summer, and went bravely down by the burn-side, and sat on stones to make a public toilet before entering! It was perhaps an air wafted from Glasgow; or perhaps it marked a stage of that dizziness of gratified vanity, in which the instinctive act passed unperceived. He was looking after! She unloaded her bosom of a prodigious sigh that was all pleasure, and betook herself to run. When she had overtaken the stragglers of her family, she caught up the niece whom she had so recently repulsed, and kissed and slapped her, and drove her away again, and ran after her with pretty cries and laughter. Perhaps she thought the laird might still be looking! But it chanced the little scene came under the view of eyes less favourable; for she overtook Mrs Hob marching with Clem and Dand.

'You're shürely fey, lass!' quoth Dandie.

'Think shame to yersel, miss!' said the strident Mrs Hob. 'Is this the gait to guide yersel on the way hame frae kirk? You're shürely no sponsible the day. And anyway I would mind my guid claes.'

'Hoot!' said Christina, and went on before them head in air, treading the rough track with the tread of a wild doe.

She was in love with herself, her destiny, the air of the hills, the benediction of the sun. All the way home, she continued under the intoxication of these sky-scraping spirits. At table she could talk freely of young Hermiston; gave her opinion of him offhand and with a loud voice, that he was a handsome young gentleman, real well-mannered and sensible-like, but it was a pity he looked doleful. Only – the moment after – a memory of his eyes in church embarrassed her. But for this inconsiderable check, all through meal time she had a

good appetite, and she kept them laughing at table, until Gib (who had returned before them from Crossmichael and his separative worship) reproved the whole of them for their levity.

Singing 'in to herself' as she went, her mind still in the turmoil of a glad confusion, the most beautiful of her sex by her victories at the kirk, the gayest by her more recent triumphs in the bosom of her own family,[4] she rose and tripped upstairs to a little loft, lighted by four panes in the gable, where she slept with one of her nieces. The niece, who followed her, presuming on 'Auntie's' high spirits, was flounced out of the apartment with small ceremony, and retired, smarting and half tearful, to bury her woes in the byre among the hay. Still humming, Christina divested herself of her finery, and put her treasures one by one in her great green trunk. The last of these was the psalm-book; it was a fine piece, the gift of Mistress Clem, in distinct old-faced type, on paper that had begun to grow foxy in the warehouse – not by service – and she was used to wrap it in a handkerchief every Sunday after its period of service was over, and bury it end-wise at the head of her trunk. As she now took it in hand the book fell open where the leaf was torn, and she stood and gazed upon that evidence of her bygone discomposure.

There returned again the vision of the two brown eyes staring at her, intent and bright, out of that dark corner of the kirk. The whole appearance and attitude, the smile, the suggested gesture of young Hermiston came before her in a flash at the sight of the torn page. 'I was surely fey!' she said, echoing the words of Dandie, and at the suggested doom her high spirits deserted her. She flung herself prone upon the bed, and lay there, holding the psalm-book in her hands for hours, for the more part in a mere stupor of unconsenting pleasure and unreasoning fear. The fear was superstitious; there came up again and again in her memory Dandie's ill-omened words, and a hundred grisly and black tales out of the immediate neighbourhood read her a commentary on their force. The pleasure was never realised. You might say the joints of her body thought and remembered, and were gladdened, but her essential self, in the immediate theatre of consciousness, talked feverishly of something else, like a nervous person at a fire. The image that she most complacently dwelt on was that of

Miss Christina in her character of the Fair Lass of Cauldstaneslap, carrying all before her in the straw-coloured frock, the violet mantle, and the yellow cobweb stockings. Archie's image, on the other hand, when it presented itself, was never welcomed – far less welcomed with any ardour, and it was exposed at times to merciless criticism. In the long vague dialogues she held in her mind, often with imaginary, often with unrealised interlocutors, Archie, if he were referred to at all, came in for savage handling. He was described as 'looking like a stirk,'[5] 'staring like a caulf,' 'a face like a ghaist's.' 'Do you call that manners?' she said; or, 'I soon put him in his place.' '"*Miss Christina, if you please, Mr Weir!*" says I, and just flyped up my skirt tails.' With gabble like this she would entertain herself long whiles together, and then her eye would perhaps fall on the torn leaf, and the eyes of Archie would appear again from the darkness of the wall, and the voluble words deserted her, and she would lie still and stupid, and think upon nothing with devotion, and be sometimes raised by a quiet sigh. Had a doctor of medicine come into that loft, he would have diagnosed a healthy, well-developed, eminently vivacious lass lying on her face in a fit of the sulks; not one who had just contracted, or was just contracting, a mortal sickness of the mind which should yet carry her towards death and despair. Had it been a doctor of psychology, he might have been pardoned for divining in the girl a passion of childish vanity, self-love *in excelsis*, and no more. It is to be understood that I have been painting chaos and describing the inarticulate. Every lineament that appears is too precise, almost every word used too strong. Take a finger-post in the mountains on a day of rolling mists; I have but copied the names that appear upon the pointers, the names of definite and famous cities far distant, and now perhaps basking in sunshine; but Christina remained all these hours, as it were, at the foot of the post itself, not moving, and enveloped in mutable and blinding wreaths of haze.

The day was growing late and the sunbeams long and level, when she sat suddenly up, and wrapped in its handkerchief and put by that psalm-book which had already played a part so decisive in the first chapter of her love-story. In the absence of the mesmerist's eye, we are told nowadays that the head of a bright nail may fill his place, if it be

steadfastly regarded. So that torn page had riveted her attention on what might else have been but little, and perhaps soon forgotten; while the ominous words of Dandie – heard, not heeded, and still remembered – had lent to her thoughts, or rather to her mood, a cast of solemnity, and that idea of Fate[6] – a pagan Fate, uncontrolled by any Christian deity, obscure, lawless, and august – moving indissuadably in the affairs of Christian men. Thus even that phenomenon of love at first sight, which is so rare and seems so simple and violent, like a disruption of life's tissue, may be decomposed into a sequence of accidents happily concurring.

She put on a grey frock and a pink kerchief, looked at herself a moment with approval in the small square of glass that served her for a toilet mirror, and went softly downstairs through the sleeping house that resounded with the sound of afternoon snoring. Just outside the door Dandie was sitting with a book in his hand, not reading, only honouring the Sabbath by a sacred vacancy of mind. She came near him and stood still.

'I'm for off up the muirs, Dandie,' she said.

There was something unusually soft in her tones that made him look up. She was pale, her eyes dark and bright; no trace remained of the levity of the morning.

'Ay, lass? Ye'll have yer ups and downs like me, I'm thinkin',' he observed.

'What for do ye say that?' she asked.

'Oh, for naething,' says Dand. 'Only I think ye're mair like me than the lave of them. Ye've mair of the poetic temper, tho' Guid kens little enough of the poetic taalent. It's an ill gift at the best. Look at yoursel. At denner you were all sunshine and flowers and laughter, and now you're like the star of evening on a lake.'

She drank in this hackneyed compliment like wine, and it glowed in her veins.

'But I'm saying, Dand' – she came nearer him – 'I'm for the muirs. I must have a braith of air. If Clem was to be speiring for me, try and quaiet him, will ye no?'

'What way?' said Dandie. 'I ken but the ae way, and that's leein'. I'll say ye had a sair heid, if ye like.'

'But I havena,' she objected.

'I daursay no,' he returned. 'I said I would say ye had; and if ye like to nay-say me when ye come back, it'll no mateerially maitter, for my chara'ter's clean gane a'ready past reca'.'

'Oh Dand, are ye a leear?' she asked, lingering.

'Folks say sae,' replied the bard.

'Wha says sae?' she pursued.

'Them that should ken the best,' he responded. 'The lassies, for ane.'

'But Dand, you would never lee to me?' she asked.

'I'll leave that for your pairt of it, ye girzie,' said he. 'Ye'll lee to me fast eneuch, when ye hae gotten a jo. I'm tellin' ye and it's true; when you have a jo, Miss Kirstie, it'll be for guid and ill. I ken: I was made that way mysel, but the deil was in my luck! Here, gang awa wi' ye to your muirs, and let me be; I'm in an hour of inspiraution, ye upsetting[7] tawpie!'

But she clung to her brother's neighbourhood, she knew not why.

'Will ye no gie's a kiss, Dand?' she said. 'I aye likit ye fine.'

He kissed her and considered her a moment; he found something strange in her. But he was a libertine[8] through and through, nourished equal contempt and suspicion of all womankind, and paid his way among them habitually with idle compliments.

'Gae wa' wi' ye!' said he. 'Ye're a dentie baby, and be content wi' that!'

That was Dandie's way; a kiss and a comfit to Jenny – a bawbee and my blessing to Jill – and good-night to the whole clan of ye, my dears! When anything approached the serious, it became a matter for men, he both thought and said. Women, when they did not absorb, were only children to be shoo'd away. Merely in his character of connoisseur, however, Dandie glanced carelessly after his sister as she crossed the meadow. 'The brat's no that bad!' he thought with surprise, for though he had just been paying her compliments, he had not really looked at her. 'Hey! what's yon?' For the grey dress was cut with short sleeves and skirts, and displayed her trim strong legs clad in pink stockings of the same shade as the kerchief she wore round her shoulders, and that shimmered as she went. This was not her way in

undress; he knew her ways and the ways of the whole sex in the countryside, no one better; when they did not go barefoot, they wore stout 'rig and furrow' woollen hose of an invisible blue mostly, when they were not black outright; and Dandie, at sight of this daintiness, put two and two together. It was a silk handkerchief, then they would be silken hose; they matched – then the whole outfit was a present of Clem's, a costly present, and not something to be worn through bog and briar, or on a late afternoon of Sunday. He whistled. 'My dentie May, either your heid's fair turned, or there's some on-goings!' he observed, and dismissed the subject.

She went slowly at first, but ever straighter and faster for the Cauldstaneslap, a pass among the hills to which the farm owed its name. The Slap opened like a doorway between two rounded hillocks; and through this ran the short cut to Hermiston. Immediately on the other side it went down through the Deil's Hags, a considerable marshy hollow of the hill tops, full of springs, and crouching junipers, and pools where the black peat-water slumbered. There was no view from here. A man might have sat upon the Praying Weaver's Stone a half-century, and seen none but the Cauldstaneslap children twice in the twenty-four hours on their way to the school and back again, an occasional shepherd, the irruption of a clan of sheep, or the birds who haunted about the springs, drinking and shrilly piping. So, when she had once passed the Slap, Kirstie was received into seclusion. She looked back a last time at the farm. It still lay deserted except for the figure of Dandie, who was now seen to be scribbling in his lap, the hour of expected inspiration having come to him at last. Thence she passed rapidly through the morass, and came to the farther end of it, where a sluggish burn discharges, and the path for Hermiston accompanies it on the beginning of its downward path. From this corner a wide view was opened to her of the whole stretch of braes upon the other side, still sallow and in places rusty with the winter, with the path marked boldly, here and there by the burn-side a tuft of birches, and – three miles off as the crow flies – from its enclosures and young plantations, the windows of Hermiston glittering in the western sun.

Here she sat down and waited, and looked for a long time at these

far-away bright panes of glass. It amused her to have so extended a view, she thought. It amused her to see the house of Hermiston – to see 'folk'; and there was an indistinguishable human unit, perhaps the gardener, visibly sauntering on the gravel paths.

By the time the sun was down and all the easterly braes lay plunged in clear shadow, she was aware of another figure coming up the path at a most unequal rate of approach, now half-running, now pausing and seeming to hesitate. She watched him at first with a total suspension of thought. She held her thought as a person holds his breathing. Then she consented to recognise him. 'He'll no be coming here, he canna be; it's no possible.' And there began to grow upon her a subdued choking suspense. He *was* coming; his hesitations had quite ceased, his step grew firm and swift; no doubt remained; and the question loomed up before her instantly: what was she to do? It was all very well to say that her brother was a laird himself; it was all very well to speak of casual intermarriages and to count cousinship, like Aunt Kirstie. The difference in their social station was trenchant; propriety, prudence, all that she had ever learned, all that she knew, bade her flee. But on the other hand the cup of life now offered to her was too enchanting. For one moment, she saw the question clearly, and definitely made her choice. She stood up and showed herself an instant in the gap relieved upon the skyline; and the next, fled trembling and sat down glowing with excitement on the Weaver's Stone. She shut her eyes, seeking, praying for composure. Her hand shook in her lap, and her mind was full of incongruous and futile speeches. What was there to make a work about? She could take care of herself, she supposed! There was no harm in seeing the laird. It was the best thing that could happen. She would mark a proper distance to him once and for all. Gradually the wheels of her nature ceased to go round so madly, and she sat in passive expectation, a quiet, solitary figure in the midst of the grey moss. I have said she was no hypocrite, but here I am at fault. She never admitted to herself that she had come up the hill to look for Archie. And perhaps after all she did not know, perhaps came as a stone falls. For the steps of love in the young, and especially in girls, are instinctive and unconscious.

In the meantime, Archie was drawing rapidly near, and he at least

was consciously seeking her neighbourhood. The afternoon had turned to ashes in his mouth; the memory of the girl had kept him from reading and drawn him as with cords; and at last, as the cool of the evening began to come on, he had taken his hat and set forth, with a smothered ejaculation, by the moor path to Cauldstaneslap. He had no hope to find her; he took the off chance without expectation of result and to relieve his uneasiness. The greater was his surprise, as he surmounted the slope and came into the hollow of the Deil's Hags, to see there, like an answer to his wishes, the little womanly figure in the grey dress and the pink kerchief sitting little, and low, and lost, and acutely solitary, in these desolate surroundings and on the weather-beaten stone of the dead weaver. Those things that still smacked of winter were all rusty about her, and those things that already relished of the spring had put forth the tender and lively colours of the season. Even in the unchanging face of the death-stone changes were to be remarked; and in the channelled lettering, the moss began to renew itself in jewels of green. By an afterthought that was a stroke of art, she had turned up over her head the back of the kerchief; so that it now framed becomingly her vivacious and yet pensive face. She leaned on her bare arm, which showed out strong and round, tapered to a slim wrist, and shimmered in the fading light. Her feet were gathered under her on one side, where they showed but a peep of the pink stocking, and repeated and continued the same note as the kerchief.[9]

Young Hermiston was struck with a certain chill. He was reminded that he now dealt in serious matters of life and death. This was a grown woman he was approaching, endowed with her mysterious potencies and attractions, the treasury of the continued race, and he was neither better nor worse than the average of his sex and age. He had a certain delicacy which had preserved him hitherto unspotted, and which (had either of them guessed it) made him a more dangerous companion when his heart should be really stirred. His throat was dry as he came near; but the appealing sweetness of her smile stood between them like a guardian angel.

For she turned to him and smiled, though without rising. There was a shade in this cavalier greeting that neither of them perceived; neither he, who simply thought it gracious and charming as herself;

nor yet she, who did not observe (quick as she was) the difference between rising to meet the laird and remaining seated to receive the expected admirer.

'Are ye stepping west, Hermiston?' said she, giving him his territorial name after the fashion of the countryside.

'I was,' said he, a little hoarsely, 'but I think I will be about the end of my stroll now. Are you like me, Miss Christina? The house would not hold me. I came here seeking air.'

He took his seat at the other end of the tombstone and studied her, wondering what was she. There was infinite import in the question alike for her and him.

'Ay,' she said. 'I couldna bear the roof either. It's a habit of mines to come up here about the gloaming when it's quaiet and caller.'

'It was a habit of my mother's also,' he said gravely. The recollection half startled him as he expressed it. He looked around. 'I have scarce been here since. It's peaceful,' he said, with a long breath.

'It's no like Glasgow,' she replied. 'A weary place, yon Glasgow! But what a day have I had for my hamecoming, and what a bonny evening!'

'Indeed, it was a wonderful day,' said Archie. 'I think I will remember it years and years until I come to die. On days like this – I do not know if you feel as I do – but everything appears so brief, and fragile, and exquisite, that I am afraid to touch life. We are here for so short a time; and all the old people before us – Rutherfords of Hermiston, Elliotts of the Cauldstaneslap – that were here but a while since, riding about and keeping up a great noise in this quiet corner – making love too, and marrying – why, where are they now? It's deadly commonplace, but after all, the commonplaces are the great poetic truths.'

He was sounding her, semi-consciously, to see if she could understand him; to learn if she were only an animal the colour of flowers, or had a soul in her to keep her sweet. She, on her part, her means well in hand, watched, womanlike, for any opportunity to shine, to abound in his humour, whatever that might be. The dramatic artist, that lies dormant or only half-awake in most human beings, had in her sprung to his feet in a divine fury, and chance had served her well.

She looked upon him with a subdued twilight look that became the hour of the day and the train of thought; earnestness shone through her like stars in the purple west; and from the great but controlled upheaval of her whole nature there passed into her voice, and rang in her lightest words, a thrill of emotion.

'Have you mind of Dand's song?' she answered. 'I think he'll have been trying to say what you have been thinking.'

'No, I never heard it,' he said. 'Repeat it to me, can you?'

'It's nothing wanting the tune,' said Kirstie.

'Then sing it me,' said he.

'On the Lord's Day? That would never do, Mr Weir!'

'I am afraid I am not so strict a keeper of the Sabbath, and there is no one in this place to hear us, unless the poor old ancient under the stone.'

'No that I'm thinking that really,' she said. 'By my way of thinking, it's just as serious as a psalm. Will I sooth it to ye, then?'

'If you please,' said he, and, drawing near to her on the tombstone, prepared to listen.

She sat up as if to sing. 'I'll only can sooth it to ye,' she explained. 'I wouldna like to sing out loud on the Sabbath. I think the birds would carry news of it to Gilbert,' and she smiled. 'It's about the Elliotts,' she continued, 'and I think there's few bonnier bits in the book-poets, though Dand has never got printed yet.'

And she began, in the low, clear tones of her half-voice, now sinking almost to a whisper, now rising to a particular note which was her best, and which Archie learned to wait for with growing emotion:

'O they rade in the rain, in the days that are gane,
In the rain and the wind and the lave,
They shoutit in the ha' and they routit on the hill,
But they're a' quaietit noo in the grave.
Auld, auld Elliotts, clay-cauld Elliotts, dour, bauld Elliotts of auld!'

All the time she sang she looked steadfastly before her, her knees straight, her hands upon her knee, her head cast back and up. The expression was admirable throughout, for had she not learned it from the lips and under the criticism of the author? When it was done, she

turned upon Archie a face softly bright, and eyes gently suffused and shining in the twilight, and his heart rose and went out to her with boundless pity and sympathy. His question was answered. She was a human being tuned to a sense of the tragedy of life; there were pathos and music and a great heart in the girl.

He arose instinctively, she also, for she saw she had gained a point, and scored the impression deeper, and she had wit enough left to flee upon a victory. They were but commonplaces that remained to be exchanged, but the low, moved voices in which they passed made them sacred in the memory. In the falling greyness of the evening he watched her figure winding through the morass, saw it turn a last time and wave a hand, and then pass through the Slap; and it seemed to him as if something went along with her out of the deepest of his heart. And something surely had come, and come to dwell there. He had retained from childhood a picture, now half-obliterated by the passage of time and the multitude of fresh impressions, of his mother telling him, with the fluttered earnestness of her voice, and often with dropping tears, the tale of the 'Praying Weaver,' on the very scene of his brief tragedy and long repose. And now there was a companion piece; and he beheld, and he should behold for ever, Christina perched on the same tomb, in the grey colours of the evening, gracious, dainty, perfect as a flower, and she also singing

> Of old, unhappy far-off things,
> And battles long ago,[10]

of their common ancestors now dead, of their rude wars composed, their weapons buried with them, and of these strange changelings, their descendants, who lingered a little in their places, and would soon be gone also, and perhaps sung of by others at the gloaming hour. By one of the unconscious arts of tenderness the two women were enshrined together in his memory. Tears, in that hour of sensibility, came into his eyes indifferently at the thought of either, and the girl, from being something merely bright and shapely, was caught up into the zone of things serious as life and death and his dead mother. So that in all ways and on either side, Fate played his game artfully with

this poor pair of children. The generations were prepared, the pangs were made ready, before the curtain rose on the dark drama.

In the same moment of time that she disappeared from Archie, there opened before Kirstie's eyes the cup-like hollow in which the farm lay. She saw, some five hundred feet below her, the house making itself bright with candles, and this was a broad hint to her to hurry. For they were only kindled on a Sabbath night with a view to that family worship which rounded in the incomparable tedium of the day and brought on the relaxation of supper. Already she knew that Robert must be within-sides at the head of the table, 'waling the portions';[11] for it was Robert in his quality of family priest and judge, not the gifted Gilbert, who officiated. She made good time accordingly down the steep ascent, and came up to the door panting as the three younger brothers, all roused at last from slumber, stood together in the cool and the dark of the evening with a fry of nephews and nieces about them, chatting and awaiting the expected signal. She stood back; she had no mind to direct attention to her late arrival or to her labouring breath.

'Kirstie, ye have shaved it this time, my lass,' said Clem. 'Whaur were ye?'

'Oh, just taking a dander by mysel,' said Kirstie.

And the talk continued on the subject of the American war,[12] without further reference to the truant who stood by them in the covert of the dusk, thrilling with happiness and the sense of guilt.

The signal was given, and the brothers began to go in one after another, amid the jostle and throng of Hob's children.

Only Dandie, waiting till the last, caught Kirstie by the arm. 'When did ye begin to dander in pink hosen, Mistress Elliott?' he whispered slyly.

She looked down; she was one blush. 'I maun have forgotten to change them,' said she; and went in to prayers in her turn with a troubled mind, between anxiety as to whether Dand should have observed her yellow stockings at church, and should thus detect her in a palpable falsehood, and shame that she had already made good his prophecy. She remembered the words of it, how it was to be when she had gotten a jo, and that that would be for good and evil. 'Will I have gotten my jo now?' she thought with a secret rapture.

And all through prayers, where it was her principal business to conceal the pink stockings from the eyes of the indifferent Mrs Hob – and all through supper, as she made a feint of eating, and sat at the table radiant and constrained – and again when she had left them and come into her chamber, and was alone with her sleeping niece, and could at last lay aside the armour of society – the same words sounded within her, the same profound note of happiness, of a world all changed and renewed, of a day that had been passed in Paradise, and of a night that was to be heaven opened. All night she seemed to be conveyed smoothly upon a shallow stream of sleep and waking, and through the bowers of Beulah;[13] all night she cherished to her heart that exquisite hope; and if, towards morning, she forgot it a while in a more profound unconsciousness, it was to catch again the rainbow thought with her first moment of awaking.

CHAPTER VII

ENTER MEPHISTOPHELES

Two days later a gig from Crossmichael deposited Frank Innes at the doors of Hermiston. Once in a way, during the past winter, Archie, in some acute phase of boredom, had written him a letter. It had contained something in the nature of an invitation, or a reference to an invitation – precisely what, neither of them now remembered. When Innes had received it, there had been nothing further from his mind than to bury himself in the moors with Archie; but not even the most acute political heads are guided through the steps of life with unerring directness. That would require a gift of prophecy which has been denied to man. For instance, who could have imagined that, not a month after he had received the letter, and turned it into mockery, and put off answering it, and in the end lost it, misfortunes of a gloomy cast should begin to thicken over Frank's career? His case may be briefly stated. His father, a small Morayshire laird with a large family, became recalcitrant and cut off the supplies; he had fitted himself out with the beginnings of quite a good law library, which, upon some sudden losses on the turf, he had been obliged to sell before they were paid for; and his bookseller, hearing some rumour of the event, took out a warrant for his arrest. Innes had early word of it, and was able to take precautions. In this immediate welter of his affairs, with an unpleasant charge hanging over him, he had judged it the part of prudence to be off instantly, had written a fervid letter to his father at Inverauld, and put himself in the coach for Crossmichael. Any port in a storm! He was manfully turning his back on the Parliament House and its gay babble, on porter and oysters, the racecourse and the ring; and manfully prepared, until these clouds should have blown by, to share a living grave with Archie Weir at Hermiston.

To do him justice, he was no less surprised to be going than Archie was to see him come; and he carried off his wonder with an infinitely better grace.

'Well, here I am!' said he, as he alighted. 'Pylades has come to Orestes[1] at last. By the way, did you get my answer? No? How very provoking! Well, here I am to answer for myself, and that's better still.'

'I am very glad to see you, of course,' said Archie. 'I make you heartily welcome, of course. But you surely have not come to stay, with the Courts still sitting; is that not most unwise?'

'Damn the Courts!' says Frank. 'What are the Courts to friendship and a little fishing?'

And so it was agreed that he was to stay, with no term to the visit but the term which he had privily set to it himself – the day, namely, when his father should have come down with the dust, and he should be able to pacify the bookseller. On such vague conditions there began for these two young men (who were not even friends) a life of great familiarity and, as the days drew on, less and less intimacy. They were together at meal times, together o' nights when the hour had come for whisky-toddy; but it might have been noticed (had there been any one to pay heed) that they were rarely so much together by day. Archie had Hermiston to attend to, multifarious activities in the hills, in which he did not require, and had even refused, Frank's escort. He would be off sometimes in the morning and leave only a note on the breakfast-table to announce the fact; and sometimes, with no notice at all, he would not return for dinner until the hour was long past. Innes groaned under these desertions; it required all his philosophy to sit down to a solitary breakfast with composure, and all his unaffected good-nature to be able to greet Archie with friendliness on the more rare occasions when he came home late for dinner.

'I wonder what on earth he finds to do, Mrs Elliott?' said he one morning, after he had just read the hasty billet and sat down to table.

'I suppose it will be business, sir,' replied the housekeeper dryly, measuring his distance off to him by an indicated curtsey.

'But I can't imagine what business!' he reiterated.

'I suppose it will be *his* business,' retorted the austere Kirstie.

He turned to her with that happy brightness that made the charm of his disposition, and broke into a peal of healthy and natural laughter.

'Well played, Mrs Elliott!' he cried, and the housekeeper's face relaxed into the shadow of an iron smile. 'Well played indeed!' said he. 'But you must not be making a stranger of me like that. Why, Archie and I were at the High School together, and we've been to College together, and we were going to the Bar together, when – you know! Dear, dear me! what a pity that was! A life spoiled, a fine young fellow as good as buried here in the wilderness with rustics; and all for what? A frolic, silly, if you like, but no more. God, how good your scones are, Mrs Elliott!'

'They're no mines, it was the lassie made them,' said Kirstie; 'and, saving your presence, there's little sense in taking the Lord's name in vain about idle vivers that you fill your kyte wi'.'

'I daresay you're perfectly right, ma'am,' quoth the imperturbable Frank. 'But as I was saying, this is a pitiable business, this about poor Archie; and you and I might do worse than put our heads together, like a couple of sensible people, and bring it to an end. Let me tell you, ma'am, that Archie is really quite a promising young man, and in my opinion he would do well at the Bar. As for his father, no one can deny his ability, and I don't fancy any one would care to deny that he has the deil's own temper –'

'If you'll excuse me, Mr Innes, I think the lass is crying on me,' said Kirstie, and flounced from the room.

'The damned, cross-grained old broomstick!' ejaculated Innes.

In the meantime, Kirstie had escaped into the kitchen, and before her vassal gave vent to her feelings.

'Here, ettercap! Ye'll have to wait on yon Innes! I canna haud myself in. "Puir Erchie"! I'd "puir Erchie" him, if I had my way! And Hermiston with the deil's ain temper! God, let him take Hermiston's scones out of his mouth first. There's no a hair on ayther o' the Weirs that hasna mair spunk and dirdum to it than what he has in his hale dwaibly body! Settin' up his snash to me! Let him gang to the black toon where he's mebbe wantit – birling in a curricle – wi' pimatum on his heid – making a mess o' himsel wi' nesty hizzies[2] – a fair

disgrace!' It was impossible to hear without admiration Kirstie's graduated disgust, as she brought forth, one after another, these somewhat baseless charges. Then she remembered her immediate purpose, and turned again on her fascinated auditor. 'Do ye no hear me, tawpie? Do ye no hear what I'm tellin' ye? Will I have to shoo ye in to him? If I come to attend to ye, mistress!' And the maid fled the kitchen, which had become practically dangerous, to attend on Innes's wants in the front parlour.

Tantaene irae?[3] Has the reader perceived the reason? Since Frank's coming there were no more hours of gossip over the supper tray! All his blandishments were in vain; he had started handicapped on the race for Mrs Elliott's favour.

But it was a strange thing how misfortune dogged him in his efforts to be genial. I must guard the reader against accepting Kirstie's epithets as evidence; she was more concerned for their vigour than for their accuracy. Dwaibly, for instance; nothing could be more calumnious. Frank was the very picture of good looks, good-humour, and manly youth. He had bright eyes with a sparkle and a dance to them, curly hair, a charming smile, brilliant teeth, an admirable carriage of the head, the look of a gentleman, the address of one accustomed to please at first sight and to improve the impression. And with all these advantages, he failed with everyone about Hermiston; with the silent shepherd, with the obsequious grieve, with the groom who was also the ploughman, with the gardener and the gardener's sister – a pious, down-hearted woman with a shawl over her ears – he failed equally and flatly. They did not like him, and they showed it. The little maid, indeed, was an exception; she admired him devoutly, probably dreamed of him in her private hours; but she was accustomed to play the part of silent auditor to Kirstie's tirades and silent recipient of Kirstie's buffets, and she had learned not only to be a very capable girl of her years, but a very secret and prudent one besides. Frank was thus conscious that he had one ally and sympathiser in the midst of that general union of disfavour that surrounded, watched, and waited on him in the house of Hermiston; but he had little comfort or society from that alliance, and the demure little maid (twelve on her last birthday) preserved her own counsel, and tripped on his service, brisk,

dumbly responsive, but inexorably unconversational. For the others, they were beyond hope and beyond endurance. Never had young Apollo been cast among such rustic barbarians. But perhaps the cause of his ill-success lay in one trait which was habitual and unconscious with him, yet diagnostic of the man. It was his practice to approach any one person at the expense of some one else. He offered you an alliance against the some one else; he flattered you by slighting him; you were drawn into a small intrigue against him before you knew how. Wonderful are the virtues of this process generally; but Frank's mistake was in the choice of the some one else. He was not politic in that; he listened to the voice of irritation. Archie had offended him at first by what he had felt to be rather a dry reception; had offended him since by his frequent absences. He was besides the one figure continually present in Frank's eye; and it was to his immediate dependants that Frank could offer the snare of his sympathy. Now the truth is that the Weirs, father and son, were surrounded by a posse of strenuous loyalists. Of my lord they were vastly proud. It was a distinction in itself to be one of the vassals of the 'Hanging Judge,' and his gross, formidable joviality was far from unpopular in the neighbourhood of his home. For Archie they had, one and all, a sensitive affection and respect which recoiled from a word of belittlement.

Nor was Frank more successful when he went farther afield. To the Four Black Brothers, for instance, he was antipathetic in the highest degree. Hob thought him too light, Gib too profane. Clem, who saw him but for a day or two before he went to Glasgow, wanted to know what the fule's business was, and whether he meant to stay here all session time! 'Yon's a drone,' he pronounced. As for Dand, it will be enough to describe their first meeting, when Frank had been whipping a river and the rustic celebrity chanced to come along the path.

'I'm told you are quite a poet,' Frank had said.

'Wha tell 't ye that, mannie?' had been the unconciliating answer.

'O, everybody,' says Frank.

'God! Here's fame!' said the sardonic poet, and he had passed on his way.

Come to think of it, we have here perhaps a truer explanation of Frank's failures. Had he met Mr Sheriff Scott he could have turned a

neater compliment, because Mr Scott would have been a friend worth making. Dand, on the other hand, he did not value sixpence, and he showed it even while he tried to flatter. Condescension is an excellent thing, but it is strange how one-sided the pleasure of it is! He who goes fishing among the Scots peasantry with condescension for a bait will have an empty basket by evening.

In proof of this theory Frank made a great success of it at the Crossmichael Club, to which Archie took him immediately on his arrival; his own last appearance on that scene of gaiety. Frank was made welcome there at once, continued to go regularly, and had attended a meeting (as the members ever after loved to tell) on the evening before his death. Young Hay and young Pringle appeared again. There was another supper at Windielaws, another dinner at Driffel; and it resulted in Frank being taken to the bosom of the county people as unreservedly as he had been repudiated by the country folk. He occupied Hermiston after the manner of an invader in a conquered capital. He was perpetually issuing from it, as from a base, to toddy parties, fishing parties, and dinner parties, to which Archie was not invited, or to which Archie would not go. It was now that the name of The Recluse became general for the young man. Some say that Innes invented it; Innes, at least, spread it abroad.

'How's all with your Recluse to-day?' people would ask.

'O, reclusing away!' Innes would declare, with his bright air of saying something witty; and immediately interrupt the general laughter which he had provoked much more by his air than his words, 'Mind you, it's all very well laughing, but I'm not very well pleased. Poor Archie is a good fellow, an excellent fellow, a fellow I always liked. I think it small of him to take his little disgrace so hard and shut himself up. "Grant that it is a ridiculous story, painfully ridiculous," I keep telling him. "Be a man! Live it down, man!" But not he. Of course it's just solitude, and shame, and all that. But I confess I'm beginning to fear the result. It would be all the pities in the world if a really promising fellow like Weir was to end ill. I'm seriously tempted to write to Lord Hermiston, and put it plainly to him.'

'I would if I were you,' some of his auditors would say, shaking the head, sitting bewildered and confused at this new view of the matter,

so deftly indicated by a single word. 'A capital idea!' they would add, and wonder at the *aplomb* and position of this young man, who talked as a matter of course of writing to Hermiston and correcting him upon his private affairs.

And Frank would proceed, sweetly confidential: 'I'll give you an idea, now. He's actually sore about the way that I'm received and he's left out in the county – actually jealous and sore. I've rallied him and I've reasoned with him, told him that every one was most kindly inclined towards him, told him even that *I* was received merely because I was his guest. But it's no use. He will neither accept the invitations he gets, nor stop brooding about the ones where he's left out. What I'm afraid of is that the wound's ulcerating. He had always one of those dark, secret, angry natures – a little underhand and plenty of bile – you know the sort. He must have inherited it from the Weirs, whom I suspect to have been a worthy family of weavers somewhere; what's the cant phrase? – sedentary occupation. It's precisely the kind of character to go wrong in a false position like what his father's made for him, or he's making for himself, whichever you like to call it. And for my part, I think it a disgrace,' Frank would say generously.

Presently the sorrow and anxiety of this disinterested friend took shape. He began in private, in conversations of two, to talk vaguely of bad habits and low habits. 'I must say I'm afraid he's going wrong altogether,' he would say. 'I'll tell you plainly, and between ourselves, I scarcely like to stay there any longer; only, man, I'm positively afraid to leave him alone. You'll see, I shall be blamed for it later on. I'm staying at a great sacrifice. I'm hindering my chances at the Bar, and I can't blind my eyes to it. And what I'm afraid of is that I'm going to get kicked for it all round before all's done. You see, nobody believes in friendship nowadays.'

'Well, Innes,' his interlocutor would reply, 'it's very good of you, I must say that. If there's any blame going, you'll always be sure of *my* good word, for one thing.'

'Well,' Frank would continue, 'candidly, I don't say it's pleasant. He has a very rough way with him; his father's son, you know. I don't say he's rude – of course, I couldn't be expected to stand that – but he steers very near the wind. No, it's not pleasant; but I tell ye, man, in

conscience I don't think it would be fair to leave him. Mind you, I don't say there's anything actually wrong. What I say is that I don't like the looks of it, man!' and he would press the arm of his momentary confidant.

In the early stages I am persuaded there was no malice. He talked but for the pleasure of airing himself. He was essentially glib, as becomes the young advocate, and essentially careless of the truth, which is the mark of the young ass; and so he talked at random. There was no particular bias, but that one which is indigenous and universal, to flatter himself and to please and interest the present friend. And by thus milling air out of his mouth, he had presently built up a presentation of Archie which was known and talked of in all corners of the county. Wherever there was a residential house and a walled garden, wherever there was a dwarfish castle and a park, wherever a quadruple cottage by the ruins of a peel-tower showed an old family going down, and wherever a handsome villa with a carriage approach and a shrubbery marked the coming up of a new one – probably on the wheels of machinery – Archie began to be regarded in the light of a dark, perhaps a vicious mystery, and the future developments of his career to be looked for with uneasiness and confidential whispering. He had done something disgraceful, my dear. What, was not precisely known, and that good kind young man, Mr Innes, did his best to make light of it. But there it was. And Mr Innes was very anxious about him now; he was really uneasy, my dear; he was positively wrecking his own prospects because he dared not leave him alone. How wholly we all lie at the mercy of a single prater, not needfully with any malign purpose! And if a man but talks of himself in the right spirit, refers to his virtuous actions by the way, and never applies to them the name of virtue, how easily his evidence is accepted in the court of public opinion!

All this while, however, there was a more poisonous ferment at work between the two lads, which came late indeed to the surface, but had modified and magnified their dissensions from the first. To an idle, shallow, easy-going customer like Frank, the smell of a mystery was attractive. It gave his mind something to play with, like a new toy to a child; and it took him on the weak side, for like many young men

coming to the Bar, and before they have been tried and found wanting, he flattered himself he was a fellow of unusual quickness and penetration. They knew nothing of Sherlock Holmes in those days, but there was a good deal said of Talleyrand.[4] And if you could have caught Frank off his guard, he would have confessed with a smirk that, if he resembled any one, it was the Marquis de Talleyrand-Périgord. It was on the occasion of Archie's first absence that this interest took root. It was vastly deepened when Kirstie resented his curiosity at breakfast, and that same afternoon there occurred another scene which clinched the business. He was fishing Swingleburn, Archie accompanying him, when the latter looked at his watch.

'Well, good-bye,' said he. 'I have something to do. See you at dinner.'

'Don't be in such a hurry,' cried Frank. 'Hold on till I get my rod up. I'll go with you; I'm sick of flogging this ditch.' And he began to reel up his line.

Archie stood speechless. He took a long while to recover his wits under this direct attack; but by the time he was ready with his answer, and the angle was almost packed up, he had become completely Weir, and the hanging face gloomed on his young shoulders. He spoke with a laboured composure, a laboured kindness even; but a child could see that his mind was made up.

'I beg your pardon, Innes; I don't want to be disagreeable, but let us understand one another from the beginning. When I want your company, I'll let you know.'

'Oh!' cried Frank, 'you don't want my company, don't you?'

'Apparently not just now,' replied Archie. 'I even indicated to you when I did, if you'll remember – and that was at dinner. If we two fellows are to live together pleasantly – and I see no reason why we should not – it can only be by respecting each other's privacy. If we begin intruding –'

'Oh, come! I'll take this at no man's hands. Is this the way you treat a guest and an old friend?' cried Innes.

'Just go home and think over what I said by yourself,' continued Archie, 'whether it's reasonable, or whether it's really offensive or not; and let's meet at dinner as though nothing had happened. I'll put it

this way, if you like – that I know my own character, that I'm looking forward (with great pleasure, I assure you) to a long visit from you, and that I'm taking precautions at the first. I see the thing that we – that I, if you like – might fall out upon, and I step in and *obsto principiis*.[5] I wager you five pounds you'll end by seeing that I mean friendliness, and I assure you, Francie, I do,' he added, relenting.

Bursting with anger, but incapable of speech, Innes shouldered his rod, made a gesture of farewell, and strode off down the burn-side. Archie watched him go without moving. He was sorry, but quite unashamed. He hated to be inhospitable, but in one thing he was his father's son. He had a strong sense that his house was his own and no man else's; and to lie at a guest's mercy was what he refused. He hated to seem harsh. But that was Frank's look-out. If Frank had been commonly discreet, he would have been decently courteous. And there was another consideration. The secret he was protecting was not his own merely; it was hers; it belonged to that inexpressible she who was fast taking possession of his soul, and whom he would soon have defended at the cost of burning cities. By the time he had watched Frank as far as the Swingleburnfoot, appearing and disappearing in the tarnished heather, still stalking at a fierce gait but already dwindled in the distance into less than the smallness of Lilliput, he could afford to smile at the occurrence. Either Frank would go, and that would be a relief – or he would continue to stay, and his host must continue to endure him. And Archie was now free – by devious paths behind hillocks and in the hollow of burns – to make for the trysting-place where Kirstie, cried about by the curlew and the plover, waited and burned for his coming by the Covenanter's stone.

Innes went off down-hill in a passion of resentment, easy to be understood, but which yielded progressively to the needs of his situation. He cursed Archie for a cold-hearted, unfriendly, rude dog; and himself still more passionately for a fool in having come to Hermiston when he might have sought refuge in almost any other house in Scotland. But the step once taken was practically irretrievable. He had no more ready money to go anywhere else; he would have to borrow from Archie the next club-night; and ill as he thought of his host's manners, he was sure of his practical generosity. Frank's resemblance

to Talleyrand strikes me as imaginary; but at least not Talleyrand himself could have more obediently taken his lesson from the facts. He met Archie at dinner without resentment, almost with cordiality. You must take your friends as you find them, he would have said. Archie couldn't help being his father's son, or his grandfather's, the hypothetical weaver's, grandson. The son of a hunks, he was still a hunks at heart, incapable of true generosity and consideration; but he had other qualities with which Frank could divert himself in the meanwhile, and to enjoy which it was necessary that Frank should keep his temper.

So excellently was it controlled that he awoke next morning with his head full of a different, though a cognate subject. What was Archie's little game? Why did he shun Frank's company? What was he keeping secret? Was he keeping tryst with somebody, and was it a woman? It would be a good joke and a fair revenge to discover. To that task he set himself with a great deal of patience, which might have surprised his friends, for he had been always credited not with patience so much as brilliancy; and little by little, from one point to another, he at last succeeded in piecing out the situation. First he remarked that, although Archie set out in all the directions of the compass, he always came home again from some point between the south and west. From the study of a map, and in consideration of the great expanse of untenanted moorland running in that direction towards the sources of the Clyde, he laid his finger on Cauldstaneslap and two other neighbouring farms, Kingsmuirs and Polintarf. But it was difficult to advance farther. With his rod for a pretext, he vainly visited each of them in turn; nothing was to be seen suspicious about this trinity of moorland settlements. He would have tried to follow Archie, had it been the least possible, but the nature of the land precluded the idea. He did the next best, ensconced himself in a quiet corner, and pursued his movements with a telescope. It was equally in vain, and he soon wearied of his futile vigilance, left the telescope at home, and had almost given the matter up in despair, when, on the twenty-seventh day of his visit, he was suddenly confronted with the person whom he sought. The first Sunday Kirstie had managed to stay away from kirk on some pretext of indisposition, which was more

truly modesty; the pleasure of beholding Archie seeming too sacred, too vivid for that public place. On the two following, Frank had himself been absent on some of his excursions among the neighbouring families. It was not until the fourth, accordingly, that Frank had occasion to set eyes on the enchantress. With the first look, all hesitation was over. She came with the Cauldstaneslap party; then she lived at Cauldstaneslap. Here was Archie's secret, here was the woman, and more than that – though I have need here of every manageable attenuation of language – with the first look, he had already entered himself as rival. It was a good deal in pique, it was a little in revenge, it was much in genuine admiration: the devil may decide the proportions; I cannot, and it is very likely that Frank could not.

'Mighty attractive milkmaid,' he observed, on the way home.

'Who?' said Archie.

'Oh, the girl you're looking at – aren't you? Forward there on the road. She came attended by the rustic bard; presumably, therefore, belongs to his exalted family. The single objection! for the Four Black Brothers are awkward customers. If anything were to go wrong, Gib would gibber, and Clem would prove inclement; and Dand fly in danders, and Hob blow up in gobbets. It would be a Helliott of a business!'

'Very humorous, I am sure,' said Archie.

'Well, I am trying to be so,' said Frank. 'It's none too easy in this place, and with your solemn society, my dear fellow. But confess that the milkmaid has found favour in your eyes, or resign all claim to be a man of taste.'

'It is no matter,' returned Archie.

But the other continued to look at him, steadily and quizzically, and his colour slowly rose and deepened under the glance, until not impudence itself could have denied that he was blushing. And at this Archie lost some of his control. He changed his stick from one hand to the other, and – 'Oh, for God's sake, don't be an ass!' he cried.

'Ass? That's the retort delicate without doubt,' said Frank. 'Beware of the homespun brothers, dear. If they come into the dance, you'll see who's an ass. Think now, if they only applied (say) a quarter as much talent as I have applied to the question of what Mr Archie does

with his evening hours, and why he is so unaffectedly nasty when the subject's touched on –'

'You are touching on it now,' interrupted Archie, with a wince.

'Thank you. That was all I wanted, an articulate confession,' said Frank.

'I beg to remind you –' began Archie.

But he was interrupted in turn. 'My dear fellow, don't. It's quite needless. The subject's dead and buried.'

And Frank began to talk hastily on other matters, an art in which he was an adept, for it was his gift to be fluent on anything or nothing. But although Archie had the grace or the timidity to suffer him to rattle on, he was by no means done with the subject. When he came home to dinner, he was greeted with a sly demand, how things were looking 'Cauldstaneslap ways.' Frank took his first glass of port out after dinner to the toast of Kirstie, and later in the evening he returned to the charge again.

'I say, Weir, you'll excuse me for returning again to this affair. I've been thinking it over, and I wish to beg you very seriously to be more careful. It's not a safe business. Not safe, my boy,' said he.

'What?' said Archie.

'Well, it's your own fault if I must put a name on the thing; but really, as a friend, I cannot stand by and see you rushing head down into these dangers. My dear boy,' said he, holding up a warning cigar, 'consider! What is to be the end of it?'

'The end of what?' – Archie, helpless with irritation, persisted in this dangerous and ungracious guard.

'Well, the end of the milkmaid; or, to speak more by the card, the end of Miss Christina Elliott of the Cauldstaneslap?'

'I assure you,' Archie broke out, 'this is all a figment of your imagination. There is nothing to be said against that young lady; you have no right to introduce her name into the conversation.'

'I'll make a note of it,' said Frank. 'She shall henceforth be nameless, nameless, nameless, Gregarach![6] I make a note besides of your valuable testimony to her character. I only want to look at this thing as a man of the world. Admitted she's an angel – but, my good fellow, is she a lady?'

This was torture to Archie. 'I beg your pardon,' he said, struggling to be composed, 'but because you have wormed yourself into my confidence –'

'Oh, come!' cried Frank. 'Your confidence? It was rosy but unconsenting. Your confidence, indeed! Now, look! This is what I must say, Weir, for it concerns your safety and good character, and therefore my honour as your friend. You say I wormed myself into your confidence. Wormed is good. But what have I done? I have put two and two together, just as the parish will be doing to-morrow, and the whole of Tweeddale in two weeks, and the Black Brothers – well, I won't put a date on that; it will be a dark and stormy morning. Your secret, in other words, is poor Poll's. And I want to ask of you as a friend whether you like the prospect? There are two horns to your dilemma, and I must say for myself I should look mighty ruefully on either. Do you see yourself explaining to the Four Black Brothers? or do you see yourself presenting the milkmaid to papa as the future lady of Hermiston? Do you? I tell you plainly, I don't'.

Archie rose. 'I will hear no more of this,' he said in a trembling voice.

But Frank again held up his cigar. 'Tell me one thing first. Tell me if this is not a friend's part that I am playing?'

'I believe you think it so,' replied Archie. 'I can go as far as that. I can do so much justice to your motives. But I will hear no more of it. I am going to bed.'

'That's right, Weir,' said Frank, heartily. 'Go to bed and think over it; and I say, man, don't forget your prayers! I don't often do the moral – don't go in for that sort of thing – but when I do there's one thing sure, that I mean it.'

So Archie marched off to bed, and Frank sat alone by the table for another hour or so, smiling to himself richly. There was nothing vindictive in his nature; but, if revenge came in his way, it might as well be good, and the thought of Archie's pillow reflections that night was indescribably sweet to him. He felt a pleasant sense of power. He looked down on Archie as on a very little boy whose strings he pulled – as on a horse whom he had backed and bridled by sheer power of intelligence, and whom he might ride to glory or the grave at pleasure.

Which was it to be? He lingered long, relishing the details of schemes that he was too idle to pursue. Poor cork upon a torrent, he tasted that night the sweets of omnipotence, and brooded like a deity over the strands of that intrigue which was to shatter him before the summer waned.

CHAPTER VIII

A NOCTURNAL VISIT

Kirstie had many causes of distress. More and more as we grow old – and yet more and more as we grow old and are women, frozen by the fear of age – we come to rely on the voice as the single outlet of the soul. Only thus, in the curtailment of our means, can we relieve the straitened cry of the passion within us; only thus, in the bitter and sensitive shyness of advancing years, can we maintain relations with those vivacious figures of the young that still show before us and tend daily to become no more than the moving wallpaper of life. Talk is the last link, the last relation. But with the end of the conversation, when the voice stops and the bright face of the listener is turned away, solitude falls again on the bruised heart. Kirstie had lost her 'cannie hour at e'en';[1] she could no more wander with Archie, a ghost, if you will, but a happy ghost, in fields Elysian. And to her it was as if the whole world had fallen silent; to him, but an unremarkable change of amusements. And she raged to know it. The effervescency of her passionate and irritable nature rose within her at times to bursting point.

This is the price paid by age for unseasonable ardours of feeling. It must have been so for Kirstie at any time when the occasion chanced; but it so fell out that she was deprived of this delight in the hour when she had most need of it, when she had most to say, most to ask, and when she trembled to recognise her sovereignty not merely in abeyance but annulled. For, with the clairvoyance of a genuine love, she had pierced the mystery that had so embarrassed Frank. She was conscious, even before it was carried out, even on that Sunday night when it began, of an invasion of her rights; and a voice told her the invader's name. Since then, by arts, by accident, by small things

observed, and by the general drift of Archie's humour, she had passed beyond all possibility of doubt. With a sense of justice that Lord Hermiston might have envied, she had that day in church considered and admitted the attractions of the younger Kirstie; and with the profound humanity and sentimentality of her nature, she had recognised the coming of fate. Not thus would she have chosen. She had seen, in imagination, Archie wedded to some tall, powerful, and rosy heroine of the golden locks, made in her own image, for whom she would have strewed the bride-bed with delight; and now she could have wept to see the ambition falsified. But the gods had pronounced, and her doom was otherwise.

She lay tossing in bed that night, besieged with feverish thoughts. There were dangerous matters pending, a battle was toward, over the fate of which she hung in jealousy, sympathy, fear, and alternate loyalty and disloyalty to either side. Now she was reincarnated in her niece, and now in Archie. Now she saw, through the girl's eyes, the youth on his knees to her, heard his persuasive instances with a deadly weakness, and received his over-mastering caresses. Anon, with a revulsion, her temper raged to see such utmost favours of fortune and love squandered on a brat of a girl, one of her own house, using her own name – a deadly ingredient – and that 'didna ken her ain mind an' was as black's your hat.' Now she trembled lest her deity should plead in vain, loving the idea of success for him like a triumph of nature; anon, with returning loyalty to her own family and sex, she trembled for Kirstie and the credit of the Elliotts. And again she had a vision of herself, the day over for her old-world tales and local gossip, bidding farewell to her last link with life and brightness and love; and behind and beyond, she saw but the blank butt-end where she must crawl to die. Had she then come to the lees? she, so great, so beautiful, with a heart as fresh as a girl's and strong as womanhood? It could not be, and yet it was so; and for a moment her bed was horrible to her as the sides of the grave. And she looked forward over a waste of hours, and saw herself go on to rage, and tremble, and be softened, and rage again, until the day came and the labours of the day must be renewed.

Suddenly she heard feet on the stairs – his feet, and soon after the

sound of a window-sash flung open. She sat up with her heart beating. He had gone to his room alone, and he had not gone to bed. She might again have one of her night cracks; and at the entrancing prospect, a change came over her mind; with the approach of this hope of pleasure, all the baser metal became immediately obliterated from her thoughts. She rose, all woman, and all the best of woman, tender, pitiful, hating the wrong, loyal to her own sex and all the weakest of that dear miscellany, nourishing, cherishing next her soft heart, voicelessly flattering, hopes that she would have died sooner than have acknowledged. She tore off her night-cap, and her hair fell about her shoulders in profusion. Undying coquetry awoke. By the faint light of her nocturnal rush, she stood before the looking-glass, carried her shapely arms above her head, and gathered up the treasures of her tresses. She was never backward to admire herself; that kind of modesty was a stranger to her nature; and she paused, struck with a pleased wonder at the sight. 'Ye daft auld wife!' she said, answering a thought that was not; and she blushed with the innocent consciousness of a child. Hastily she did up the massive and shining coils, hastily donned a wrapper, and with the rush-light in her hand, stole into the hall. Below stairs she heard the clock ticking the deliberate seconds, and Frank jingling with the decanters in the dining-room. Aversion rose in her, bitter and momentary. 'Nesty, tippling puggy!' she thought; and the next moment she had knocked guardedly at Archie's door and was bidden enter.

Archie had been looking out into the ancient blackness, pierced here and there with a rayless star; taking the sweet air of the moors and the night into his bosom deeply; seeking, perhaps finding, peace after the manner of the unhappy. He turned round as she came in, and showed her a pale face against the window-frame.

'Is that you, Kirstie?' he asked. 'Come in!'

'It's unco late, my dear,' said Kirstie, affecting unwillingness.

'No, no,' he answered, 'not at all. Come in, if you want a crack. I am not sleepy, God knows!'

She advanced, took a chair by the toilet-table and the candle, and set the rush-light at her foot. Something – it might be in the comparative disorder of her dress, it might be the emotion that now welled in

her bosom – had touched her with a wand of transformation, and she seemed young with the youth of goddesses.

'Mr Erchie,' she began, 'what's this that's come to ye?'

'I am not aware of anything that has come,' said Archie, and blushed, and repented bitterly that he had let her in.

'Oh, my dear, that'll no dae!' said Kirstie. 'It's ill to blind the eyes of love. Oh, Mr Erchie, tak' a thocht ere it's ower late. Ye shouldna be impatient o' the braws o' life, they'll a' come in their saison, like the sun and the rain. Ye're young yet; ye've mony cantie years afore ye. See and dinna wreck yersel at the outset like sae mony ithers! Hae patience – they telled me aye that was the owercome o' life – hae patience, there's a braw day coming yet. Gude kens it never cam' to me; and here I am, wi' nayther man nor bairn to ca' my ain, wearying a' folks wi' my ill tongue, and you just the first, Mr Erchie!'

'I have a difficulty in knowing what you mean,' said Archie.

'Weel, and I'll tell ye,' she said. 'It's just this, that I'm feared. I'm feared for ye, my dear. Remember, your faither is a hard man, reaping where he hasna sowed and gaithering where he hasna strawed. It's easy speakin', but mind! Ye'll have to look in the gurly face o'm, where it's ill to look, and vain to look for mercy. Ye mind me o' a bonny ship pitten oot into the black and gowsty seas – ye're a' safe still, sittin' quaiet and crackin' wi' Kirstie in your lown chalmer; but whaur will ye be the morn, and in whatten horror o' the fearsome tempest, cryin' on the hills to cover ye?'

'Why, Kirstie, you're very enigmatical to-night – and very eloquent,' Archie put in.

'And, my dear Mr Erchie,' she continued, with a change of voice, 'ye mauna think that I canna sympathise wi' ye. Ye mauna think that I havena been young mysel. Lang syne, when I was a bit lassie, no twenty yet –' She paused and sighed. 'Clean and caller, wi' a fit like the hinney bee,' she continued. 'I was aye big and buirdly, ye maun understand; a bonny figure o' a woman, though I say it that suldna – built to rear bairns – braw bairns they suld hae been, and grand I would hae likit it! But I was young, dear, wi' the bonny glint o' youth in my e'en, and little I dreamed I'd ever be tellin' ye this, an auld, lanely, rudas wife! Weel, Mr Erchie, there was a lad cam' courtin' me,

as was but naetural. Mony had come before, and I would nane o' them. But this yin had a tongue to wile the birds frae the lift and the bees frae the foxglove bells. Deary me, but it's lang syne. Folk have dee'd sinsyne and been buried, and are forgotten, and bairns been born and got merrit and got bairns o' their ain. Sinsyne woods have been plantit, and have grawn up and are bonny trees, and the joes sit in their shadow, and sinsyne auld estates have changed hands, and there have been wars and rumours of wars on the face of the earth. And here I'm still – like an auld droopit craw – lookin' on and craikin'. But, Mr Erchie, do ye no think that I have mind o' it a' still? I was dwallin' then in my faither's house; and it's a curious thing that we were whiles trysted in the Deil's Hags. And do ye no think that I have mind of the bonny simmer days, the lang miles o' the bluid-red heather, the cryin' o' the whaups, and the lad and the lassie that was trysted? Do ye no think that I mind how the hilly sweetness ran about my hairt? Ay, Mr Erchie, I ken the way o' it – fine do I ken the way – how the grace o' God takes them, like Paul of Tarsus, when they think it least, and drives the pair o' them into a land which is like a dream, and the world and the folks in't are nae mair than clouds to the puir lassie, and heeven nae mair than windlestraes, if she can but pleesure him! Until Tam dee'd – that was my story,' she broke off to say, 'he dee'd, and I wasna at the buryin'. But while he was here, I could take care o' mysel. And can yon puir lassie?'

Kirstie, her eyes shining with unshed tears, stretched out her hand towards him appealingly; the bright and the dull gold of her hair flashed and smouldered in the coils behind her comely head, like the rays of an eternal youth; the pure colour had risen in her face; and Archie was abashed alike by her beauty and her story. He came towards her slowly from the window, took up her hand in his and kissed it.

'Kirstie,' he said hoarsely, 'you have misjudged me sorely. I have always thought of her, I wouldna harm her for the universe, my woman!'

'Eh, lad, and that's easy sayin',' cried Kirstie, 'but it's nane sae easy doin'! Man, do ye no comprehend that it's God's wull we should be blendit and glamoured, and have nae command over our ain

members at a time like that? My bairn,' she cried, still holding his hand, 'think o' the puir lass! have pity upon her, Erchie! and oh, be wise for twa! Think o' the risk she rins! I have seen ye, and what's to prevent ithers? I saw ye once in the Hags, in my ain howf, and I was wae to see ye there – in pairt for the omen, for I think there's a weird on the place – and in pairt for puir nakit envy and bitterness o' hairt. It's strange ye should forgather there tae! God! but yon puir, thrawn auld Covenanter's seen a heap o' human natur since he lookit his last on the musket-barrels, if he never saw nane afore,' she added, with a kind of wonder in her eyes.

'I swear by my honour I have done her no wrong,' said Archie. 'I swear by my honour and the redemption of my soul that there shall none be done her. I have heard of this before. I have been foolish, Kirstie, not unkind, and, above all, not base.'

'There's my bairn!' said Kirstie, rising. 'I'll can trust ye noo, I'll can gang to my bed wi' an easy hairt.' And then she saw in a flash how barren had been her triumph. Archie had promised to spare the girl, and he would keep it; but who had promised to spare Archie? What was to be the end of it? Over a maze of difficulties she glanced, and saw, at the end of every passage, the flinty countenance of Hermiston. And a kind of horror fell upon her at what she had done. She wore a tragic mask. 'Erchie, the Lord peety you, dear, and peety me! I have buildit on this foundation' – laying her hand heavily on his shoulder – 'and buildit hie, and pit my hairt in the buildin' of it. If the hale hypothec were to fa', I think, laddie, I would dee! Excuse a daft wife that loves ye, and that kenned your mither. And for His name's sake keep yersel frae inordinate desires; haud your hairt in baith your hands, carry it canny and laigh; dinna send it up like a bairn's kite into the collieshangie o' the wunds! Mind, Maister Erchie dear, that this life's a' disappointment, and a mouthfu' o' mools is the appointed end.'

'Ay, but Kirstie, my woman, you're asking me ower much at last,' said Archie, profoundly moved, and lapsing into the broad Scots. 'Ye're asking what nae man can grant ye, what only the Lord of Heaven can grant ye if He see fit. Ay! And can even He? I can promise ye what I shall do, and you can depend on that. But how I shall feel – my woman, that is long past thinking of!'

They were both standing by now opposite each other. The face of Archie wore the wretched semblance of a smile; hers was convulsed for a moment.

'Promise me ae thing,' she cried, in a sharp voice. 'Promise me ye'll never do naething without telling me.'

'No, Kirstie, I canna promise ye that,' he replied. 'I have promised enough, God kens!'

'May the blessing of God lift and rest upon ye, dear!' she said.

'God bless ye, my old friend,' said he.

CHAPTER IX

AT THE WEAVER'S STONE

It was late in the afternoon when Archie drew near by the hill path to the Praying Weaver's Stone. The Hags were in shadow. But still, through the gate of the Slap, the sun shot a last arrow, which sped far and straight across the surface of the moss, here and there touching and shining on a tussock, and lighted at length on the gravestone and the small figure awaiting him there. The emptiness and solitude of the great moors seemed to be concentrated there, and Kirstie pointed out by that finger of sunshine for the only inhabitant. His first sight of her was thus excruciatingly sad, like a glimpse of a world from which all light, comfort, and society were on the point of vanishing. And the next moment, when she had turned her face to him and the quick smile had enlightened it, the whole face of nature smiled upon him in her smile of welcome. Archie's slow pace was quickened; his legs hasted to her though his heart was hanging back. The girl, upon her side, drew herself together slowly and stood up, expectant; she was all languor, her face was gone white; her arms ached for him, her soul was on tip-toes. But he deceived her, pausing a few steps away, not less white than herself, and holding up his hand with a gesture of denial.

'No, Christina, not to-day,' he said. 'To-day I have to talk to you seriously. Sit ye down, please, there where you were. Please!' he repeated.

The revulsion of feeling in Christina's heart was violent. To have longed and waited these weary hours for him, rehearsing her endearments – to have seen him at last come – to have been ready there, breathless, wholly passive, his to do what he would with – and suddenly to have found herself confronted with a grey-faced, harsh schoolmaster – it was too rude a shock. She could have wept, but

pride withheld her. She sat down on the stone, from which she had arisen, part with the instinct of obedience, part as though she had been thrust there. What was this? Why was she rejected? Had she ceased to please? She stood here offering her wares, and he would none of them! And yet they were all his! His to take and keep; not his to refuse, though! In her quick petulant nature, a moment ago on fire with hope, thwarted love and wounded vanity wrought. The schoolmaster that there is in all men, to the despair of all girls and most women, was now completely in possession of Archie. He had passed a night of sermons; a day of reflection; he had come wound up to do his duty; and the set mouth, which in him only betrayed the effort of his will, to her seemed the expression of an averted heart. It was the same with his constrained voice and embarrassed utterance; and if so – if it was all over – the pang of the thought took away from her the power of thinking.

He stood before her some way off. 'Kirstie, there's been too much of this. We've seen too much of each other.' She looked up quickly and her eyes contracted. 'There's no good ever comes of these secret meetings. They're not frank, not honest truly, and I ought to have seen it. People have begun to talk; and it's not right of me. Do you see?'

'I see somebody will have been talking to ye,' she said sullenly.

'They have, more than one of them,' replied Archie.

'And whae were they?' she cried. 'And what kind o' love do ye ca' that, that's ready to gang round like a whirligig at folk talking? Do ye think they havena talked to me?'

'Have they indeed?' said Archie, with a quick breath. 'That is what I feared. Who were they? Who has dared –'

Archie was on the point of losing his temper.

As a matter of fact, not any one had talked to Christina on the matter; and she strenuously repeated her own first question in a panic of self-defence.

'Ah, well! what does it matter?' he said. 'They were good folk that wished well to us, and the great affair is that there are people talking. My dear girl, we have to be wise. We must not wreck our lives at the outset. They may be long and happy yet, and we must see to it,

Kirstie, like God's rational creatures and not like fool children. There is one thing we must see to before all. You're worth waiting for, Kirstie! worth waiting for a generation; it would be enough reward.' – And here he remembered the schoolmaster again, and very unwisely took to following wisdom. 'The first thing that we must see to, is that there shall be no scandal about, for my father's sake. That would ruin all; do ye no see that?'

Kirstie was a little pleased, there had been some show of warmth of sentiment in what Archie had said last. But the dull irritation still persisted in her bosom; with the aboriginal instinct, having suffered herself, she wished to make Archie suffer.

And besides, there had come out the word she had always feared to hear from his lips, the name of his father. It is not to be supposed that, during so many days with a love avowed between them, some reference had not been made to their conjoint future. It had in fact been often touched upon, and from the first had been the sore point. Kirstie had wilfully closed the eye of thought; she would not argue even with herself; gallant, desperate little heart, she had accepted the command of that supreme attraction like the call of Fate and marched blindfold on her doom. But Archie, with his masculine sense of responsibility, must reason; he must dwell on some future good, when the present good was all in all to Kirstie; he must talk – and talk lamely, as necessity drove him – of what was to be. Again and again he had touched on marriage; again and again been driven back into indistinctness by a memory of Lord Hermiston. And Kirstie had been swift to understand and quick to choke down and smother the understanding; swift to leap up in flame at a mention of that hope, which spoke volumes to her vanity and her love, that she might one day be Mrs Weir of Hermiston; swift, also, to recognise in his stumbling or throttled utterance the death-knell of these expectations, and constant, poor girl! in her large-minded madness, to go on and to reck nothing of the future. But these unfinished references, these blinks in which his heart spoke, and his memory and reason rose up to silence it before the words were well uttered, gave her unqualifiable agony. She was raised up and dashed down again bleeding. The recurrence of the subject forced her, for however short a time, to open her eyes on

what she did not wish to see; and it had invariably ended in another disappointment. So now again, at the mere wind of its coming, at the mere mention of his father's name – who might seem indeed to have accompanied them in their whole moorland courtship, an awful figure in a wig with an ironical and bitter smile, present to guilty consciousness – she fled from it head down.

'Ye havena told me yet,' she said, 'who was it spoke?'

'Your aunt for one,' said Archie.

'Auntie Kirstie?' she cried. 'And what do I care for my Auntie Kirstie?'

'She cares a great deal for her niece,' replied Archie, in kind reproof.

'Troth, and it's the first I've heard of it,' retorted the girl.

'The question here is not who it is, but what they say, what they have noticed,' pursued the lucid schoolmaster. 'That is what we have to think of in self-defence!'

'Auntie Kirstie, indeed! A bitter, thrawn auld maid that's fomented trouble in the country before I was born, and will be doing it still, I daur say, when I'm deid! It's in her nature; it's as natural for her as it's for a sheep to eat.'

'Pardon me, Kirstie, she was not the only one,' interposed Archie. 'I had two warnings, two sermons, last night, both most kind and considerate. Had you been there, I promise you you would have grat, my dear! And they opened my eyes. I saw we were going a wrong way.'

'Who was the other one?' Kirstie demanded.

By this time Archie was in the condition of a hunted beast. He had come, braced and resolute; he was to trace out a line of conduct for the pair of them in a few cold, convincing sentences; he had now been there some time, and he was still staggering round the outworks and undergoing what he felt to be a savage cross-examination.

'Mr Frank!' she cried. 'What nex', I would like to ken?'

'He spoke most kindly and truly.'

'What like did he say?'

'I am not going to tell you; you have nothing to do with that,' cried Archie, startled to find he had admitted so much.

'Oh, I have naething to do with it!' she repeated, springing to her

feet. 'A'body at Hermiston's free to pass their opinions upon me, but I have naething to do wi' it! Was this at prayers like? Did ye ca' the grieve into the consultation? Little wonder if a'body's talking, when ye make a'body yer confidants! But as you say, Mr Weir – most kindly, most considerately, most truly, I'm sure – I have naething to do with it. And I think I'll better be going. I'll be wishing you good-evening, Mr Weir.' And she made him a stately curtsey, shaking as she did so from head to foot, with the barren ecstasy of temper.

Poor Archie stood dumbfounded. She had moved some steps away from him before he recovered the gift of articulate speech.

'Kirstie!' he cried. 'Oh, Kirstie woman!'

There was in his voice a ring of appeal, a clang of mere astonishment that showed the schoolmaster was vanquished.

She turned round on him. 'What do ye Kirstie me for?' she retorted. 'What have ye to do wi' me? Gang to your ain freends and deave them!'

He could only repeat the appealing 'Kirstie!'

'Kirstie, indeed!' cried the girl, her eyes blazing in her white face. 'My name is Miss Christina Elliott, I would have ye to ken, and I daur ye to ca' me out of it. If I canna get love, I'll have respect, Mr Weir. I'm come of decent people, and I'll have respect. What have I done that ye should lightly me? What have I done? What have I done? Oh, what have I done?' and her voice rose upon the third repetition. 'I thocht – I thocht – I thocht I was sae happy!' and the first sob broke from her like the paroxysm of some mortal sickness.

Archie ran to her. He took the poor child in his arms, and she nestled to his breast as to a mother's, and clasped him in hands that were strong like vices. He felt her whole body shaken by the throes of distress, and had pity upon her beyond speech. Pity, and at the same time a bewildered fear of this explosive engine in his arms, whose works he did not understand, and yet had been tampering with. There arose from before him the curtain of boyhood, and he saw for the first time the ambiguous face of woman as she is. In vain he looked back over the interview; he saw not where he had offended. It seemed unprovoked, a wilful convulsion of brute nature . . .[1]

NOTES

'TO MY WIFE'

1. *counsel*: Catherine Kerrigan's edition gives 'censure'.

INTRODUCTORY

1. *destiny*: Stevenson's words of introduction hark back to the sufferings of the Covenanters in the seventeenth century, while also looking forward to what is due to happen in the novel. John Graham of Claverhouse was known as Bloody Clavers and as Bonny Dundee, the duality of these other names characterizing the glamorous Royalist general who took part in the suppression of Covenanting activity; it has since been suggested that he was less sanguinary, in this role, than martyrology made out. He fell at the battle of Killiecrankie (1689). Richard Cameron, whose Cameronian following survived his death, was one of the most intransigent of the Covenanting ministers. Balweary is the moorland parish where *Weir of Hermiston* is set; the parish reappears in two more of Stevenson's works, 'Thrawn Janet' and 'Heathercat'; the name is that of a place in Fife associated, in Stevenson's day, with the medieval philosopher and reputed warlock, Michael Scot. The setting of *Weir* is a Lammermuir setting, but with features from Upper Tweeddale and the Pentland Hills. The kirk of Glencorse in the Pentlands, and one of its ministers, lend themselves to the Sabbaths in *Weir*. In a letter of 28 October 1892 to *Weir*'s first editor Sidney Colvin (*The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, Tusitala Edition, 1924, vol. 4), the writer speaks, not altogether plainly, of the scene of the novel as being 'about Hermiston, in the Lammermuirs and in Edinburgh'; the name Hermiston has since been identified as that of a farm inland of the Lammermuirs, between Ettrick and Teviotdale, deep in the Border country, and is also that of a place just outside Edinburgh, overlooked by the Pentland Hills. Old Mortality is Robert Paterson, who appears in the Introduction to

Walter Scott's Covenanter novel of that name: Paterson (1715–1801) wandered about the South-West tending monuments to the martyrs. Francie's Cairn is named after the Mephistophelean advocate in the novel, Frank Innes; the name 'Frank' was a familiar abbreviation of 'Francis' in the Edinburgh Stevenson is describing. The form 'Francie' also occurs in the Balweary described in 'Heathercat', which he was writing at the same time as *Weir*, and in which Francie, nicknamed Heathercat, is the 'shy, secret, and rather childish' boy hero, an only son of ancient descent, who is as strong as he is weak. Conscious of the Covenanters and their language, and, it would seem, of James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, with its mismatched laird and pious lady and its suffering son, 'Heathercat' is interesting company for *Weir*. A testimony mentioned in Compton Mackenzie's study of the writer (1968) has it that there's a weaver's stone near Edinburgh where Stevenson used to court the daughter of a local farmer; his life and work have been such as to excite such stories. *Weir of Hermiston* was at first called 'The Justice-Clerk', which is the title of the head of the Scottish criminal justiciary.

CHAPTER I: LIFE AND DEATH OF MRS WEIR

1. *riding Rutherfords of Hermiston*: the Rutherfords, in other words, were reivers or moss-troopers in the days when the Borders were badlands.
2. *flux*: 'Bloody Dalyell' was a Royalist general. The Hell-Fire Club is to be understood as resembling the scandalous Thames-side establishment frequented by the politician John Wilkes and the novelist William Beckford. A judgement can mean an act of God in punishment of sin. The Session is the Court of Session. In Scotland, 'writer' is a word for a solicitor, and 'doer' bears the same meaning here. Long spoons are proverbially required by those who sup with the Devil.
3. *Lord Advocate*: the post of Crown Prosecutor in Scotland, which has carried extensive governmental and legal responsibilities.
4. *Keep me*: save me.
5. *puddocks*: generally frogs. A Francophobe joke is unlikely to be intended. Hermiston's demand would appear to be for puddings, in the form of sausages or haggises. A gigot is a leg of lamb. The remark about Grumbletonians (oppositionists, reformers) is supplied in Catherine Kerrigan's edition.
6. *the like*: Samuel Rutherford and Henry Scougal are seventeenth-century divines. Scougal, author of *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, was credited in earlier editions with Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*.
7. *enemies*: in Covenanting annals, three noted persecutors of God's chosen

people. Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh was very much more than that. He was an opponent of witchcraft prosecutions and a founder of the Advocates' Library, and his treatise on the criminal law was the standard authority for over a century. Both of the other two men, the first Duke of Lauderdale and the first Duke of Rothes respectively, were Covenanting leaders who turned their coats after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Thomas Dalyell inflicted a defeat on the Covenanters at Rullion Green in 1666.

8. *marrowy*: pithy. 'Marrow' was, as 'savoury' was, a word traditionally applied for affirmative purposes in the context of dogmatic religion. In 1718 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland declared unsound a work by an English theologian, Edward Fisher, published in 1645, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, and a controversy ensued. Mrs Weir's favourite texts are from the New Testament, and from the Sermon on the Mount in particular.

9. *Naphtali*: see Introduction, pp. xvii, xxxiii.

10. *chief of sinners*: the antinomian title, as it might be termed, of Bunyan's (rather than Scougal's) spiritual autobiography is *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*.

11. *the Hanging Judge*: together with his wife, Stevenson wrote a play of this name – not based on Braxfield.

12. *milestone*: Matthew 18:6 reads: 'But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.' Archie's 'milestone' is meant, presumably, as a little one's error.

13. *mote*: the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:1, 3) says, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged,' while proceeding to say: 'And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?' Mrs Weir's entreaties invite reference to the Fifth Commandment of the Mosaic Ten: 'Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.' According to the Shorter Catechism (Question and Answer 66), this Commandment holds out 'a promise of long life and prosperity'. The Shorter Catechism was a vital text for the Stevenson family, and the son of the house was described in a poem by W. E. Henley as a mixture of Ariel and the Shorter Catechist.

14. *bitch*: the term has served in Scotland as a contemptuous endearment. 'Fare ye a' weel, ye bitches' were said to have been the parting words of the eighteenth-century judge Lord Kames to his colleagues on the bench. Saying farewell to J. M. Barrie at the close of a letter of 1 November 1892, Stevenson imitates what he calls these 'inimitable words of Lord Kames'.

15. *ill to please*: some of them are pretty hard to please.

CHAPTER II: FATHER AND SON

1. *Corderius, Papinian and Paul*: Scots law was in large measure derived from Roman law, with Justinian's *Institutes* and *Pandects* among its central texts, and Papinian and Paul are Roman jurists. Corderius was a French schoolmaster and scholar: his pupils included John Calvin. He was the author of children's books and of Latin primers.
2. *Forbes of Culloden*: Duncan Forbes was instrumental in securing Scotland for the Hanoverian Government at the time of the Forty-Five rebellion, and a voice for humanity in the pacification that followed. Henry Cockburn praised his fairmindedness and executive skills in the *Edinburgh Review* (February 1816).
3. *Cato and Brutus*: Cato the Censor was an austere Roman statesman. The Brutus referred to is thought to be the republican who drove the despotic Tarquins from Rome. His two sons plotted to restore them. He condemned them for this and witnessed their execution.
4. *Speculative Society*: an Edinburgh University debating club, which still meets.
5. *Rhadamanthus*: a legendary judge of supreme severity, the Lord Justice-Clerk of the Classical Underworld.

CHAPTER III: IN THE MATTER OF THE HANGING OF DUNCAN JOPP

1. *hooded stag*: David I was hunting near the little mountain of Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh, at the foot of which stands the palace of Holyrood, when he was threatened by a stag and miraculously saved by finding in his hand a piece of the Holy Cross.
2. *policy*: when he was a student at Edinburgh University, Stevenson read a Speculative Society paper on 'the influence of the Covenanting persecution on the Scottish mind', and proposed that the society hold a debate on capital punishment.
3. *Dr Gregory*: a distinguished medical man of the time who became, in 1790, Professor of the Practice of Medicine at Edinburgh University.
4. *Peninsula*: the Peninsular War (1808–14) was fought between Napoleon's troops and an alliance of British, Spanish and Portuguese forces.

CHAPTER IV: OPINIONS OF THE BENCH

1. *divisions*: Scotland's highest courts are the civil Court of Session and the criminal Court of Judiciary. The judges of the first court are called the Senators of the College of Justice. In 1808 the Inner House of the Court of Session was split into two divisions; before that, the old Court of fifteen judges sat as a single body. In this chapter Stevenson describes a judicial session suggestive of the days of 'the Haill Fifteen' (the Whole Fifteen), as the old Court used to be called.

2. *in apicibus juris*: he was revelling in his attainment of the heights of the law, or was at the height of his powers as a lawyer. Infeftment has to do with assigning possession of heritable property. An instrument of sasine furnishes legal evidence of this.

3. *sui juris*: he is being described, in terms of Roman law, as having reached his majority and passed beyond a father's control.

4. *Tigris ut aspera*: as fierce as a tiger – a quotation from Book One of Horace's Odes.

5. *law studies*: one of the 1892 manuscripts proceeds with the following:

. . . leave my law studies and shut myself in the country.'

'What I have to ask of you,' resumed Archie, 'is that you would convey to their lordships, my father's colleagues, the expression of my concern for what I have done. The pranks of a student are not of much importance; but I should have remembered, before I tried to obtrude my opinions on the public, that I am my father's son and if I made myself' – he hesitated – 'if I made myself ridiculous, some of it must splash upon Lord Hermiston.'

The two judges looked at each other for all the world as though they were on the bench at an advising; and in this silent colloquy, Glenalmond claimed and Glenkindie conceded the precedence. The old gentleman spoke as follows, in a very formal, and yet cordial voice. 'We have heard what you had to say; we shall reduce a note of it to history after you are gone; and I shall make it my pleasure to see that each of my colleagues is informed correctly. I shall also, if Lord Glenkindie has no objection, repeat the same to your father; adding, what I very strongly feel, that it is impossible a false step should be more handsomely retracted.'

'I thank you, my Lords,' said Archie, 'and if you will excuse me, I will leave you to your conversation.'

Archie bowed and turned towards the other.

'Very proaper,' said Glenkindie. 'Very proaper indeed. So you're going to Hermiston? Well, well, cheer up. It is a good time coming. And see and take care of the toaddy; they take an awful lot of toaddy up there on the muirs.'

CHAPTER V: WINTER ON THE MOORS

1. *Mr Sheriff Scott*: the novelist Walter Scott in his capacities as lawyer and as improver and landscape gardener.
2. *lever de rideau*: rise of the curtain.
3. *Lyon King of Arms*: Scotland's principal authority on heraldic matters.
4. *Camperdown and Cape St Vincent*: British naval victories over the Dutch and the French respectively. The 1894 manuscript has: 'in '98, the year of Nelson and the Nile'.
5. *Barbarossa*: Frederick I ('Red Beard') of the Holy Roman Empire, an invader of Italy.
6. *sanguishes*: sandwiches – a phonetic spelling touchingly true to a surviving Scottish life.
7. *Muir and Palmer*: two of the reformers tried by Braxfield. Thomas Muir, a lawyer, was transported to Botany Bay for fourteen years but remained in Australia for only two. He was the foremost of the Scottish radicals and had dealings with the leaders of the Revolution in France, where he died. It has been suggested that 'hawse', which means the bow of a ship, may be a compositor's misreading of 'tawse', meaning the leather strap long used to punish the pupils of Scottish schools. 'Hawse' seems to be correct, and is consistent with a nautical metaphor for Braxfield's aggressions which appears on an earlier page (28), where mention is made of 'the very guns of his broadside'. Stevenson was, after all, a seafarer.
8. *antinomian in principle*: they believed, that is to say, that the elected person may be exempt from the requirements of morality – saved by the operations of God's grace, justified by faith as opposed to works. However heretical or schismatic others might think it, 'God's Remnant' is a sect which has clearly not divorced itself from the Covenanting tradition.
9. *Ettrick Shepherd*: Dandie is meant to incorporate touches of Robert Burns (who spoke of dying young '*en poète*' – in the manner of a poet), and rather more than touches of the Ettrick Shepherd, James Hogg, who was a friend of Scott's, a contributor to Scott's ballad book *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, a poet, and a novelist of great power and originality. Hogg's novel, the *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), is in one of its aspects a depiction of puritanical excess and of an antinomian heresy and psychology. He was treated with condescension and disapproval by members of Scott's circle, by Scott himself at times, and, well into the present century, by members of the Scottish bourgeoisie. He was a boastful, complicated, somewhat inscrutable man, who laid himself open to travesty; like Burns, he could be sentimentalized as

nature's bard while being despised as a man of the people. Stevenson's mother thought that the *Confessions* was too good a book for Hogg to have written, and here too at times her son falls into this old habit of disparagement: *Weir* says of its humble poet that Scott 'appreciated his talents, such as they were'.

10. *stool of repentance*: where sexual sinners such as Burns were exposed in church by way of punishment.

11. *Roy ne puis . . .*: I can't be a king, and I disdain to be a prince – the motto of the Rohans, a Breton family of ancient lineage.

12. *ipsissimus*: himself, the very man.

CHAPTER VI: A LEAF FROM CHRISTINA'S PSALM-BOOK

1. *and with perfect haughty unconsciousness*: an 1894 manuscript reading omitted from the first edition.

2. *primroses*: the description of Kirstie's spring outfit recalls Samuel Richardson's virtuoso description of Clarissa's, with its morning gown of 'pale primrose-coloured paduasoy'. Both girls are Primaveras, their beauty half-disclosed to the world. Both of the observant males in question are in a position to 'see the breasts heave', as Stevenson puts it. By *demi-broquins* (a.k.a. demmy brokens) he appears to mean *brodequins* – laced boots or half-boots, with a cuff at the top, and with theatrical associations.

3. *tiger lilies*: a simile from the manuscript material of 1892 which develops the reference to 'threads of bronze and gold'.

4. *family*: 'the most beautiful . . . family' – a passage from the 1894 manuscript omitted from the first edition.

5. *stirk*: a bullock. Catherine Kerrigan's edition reads 'stork'.

6. *Fate*: Paul Binding's Penguin Classics edition comments on the Hardy-like character of these reflections, and quotes from Stevenson's letter to James Barrie of 1 November 1892, which says of Kirstie with reference to Hardy's Tess: 'Suffice it to breathe in your ear that she was what Hardy calls (and others in their plain way don't) a Pure Woman.'

7. *upsetting*: forward, aspiring (the Kerrigan edition reads 'upsittin'). 'Girzie' means maidservant, and is also a version of the name Grizel. Burns writes of a 'godly Girzie' accosted on her way home from a prayer meeting:

> And she was faint wi' haly wark,
> She had na pith to say him na.

8. *libertine*: Stevenson's essay on Burns objects to his seducer's attitude towards women. The essay offended respectable people who had learnt to worship the poet and to forgive him his trespasses. Jane Austen shared Stevenson's poor view of the poet's Don Juanism.
9. *kerchief*: this sentence, and the preceding one, follow the 1894 manuscript. The first edition hasn't a peep of the pink stocking.
10. *battles long ago*: from Wordsworth's poem 'The Solitary Reaper'.
11. *waling the portions*: choosing passages. The quotation is from Burns's far from libertine poem, 'The Cotter's Saturday Night', where an admonitory patriarch is shown conducting, by the fireside, a religious service with the customary elements of hymn, Bible reading and prayer:

> He wales a portion with judicious care,
> And 'Let us worship God!' he says with solemn air.

12. *American war*: the war with America of 1812–14, set off by the struggle with Napoleon.
13. *Beulah*: a heavenly region spoken of in Isaiah and in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress.*

CHAPTER VII: ENTER MEPHISTOPHELES

1. *Pylades has come to Orestes*: an allusion to two figures from Greek tragedy. Orestes and Pylades are close friends, and co-avengers of the murder of Orestes' father Agamemnon. The allusion has an ironic force which serves to introduce the story of the dangerous cohabitation of Francie and Archie – the episodes of which contain some of Stevenson's most observant and persuasive writing. 'God, how good your scones are, Mrs Elliott!' Frank Innes sounds a note of the patrician Scots bachelor which can be heard to this day.
2. *nesty hizzies*: dirty trollops. It is impossible to read Kirstie's diatribe without admiration. Her Scots here is as funny as it is exact and rich. Compare Hamlet's

> honeying and making love
> Over the nasty sty.

3. *Tantaene irae*: a reference to the opening lines of Virgil's *Aeneid*, to his *Tantaene animis caelestibus irae* – can the gods feel such rage? Virgil is speaking of Juno's resentment of Aeneas and the Trojans.
4. *Talleyrand*: the celebrated French foreign minister (1754–1838).
5. *obsto principiis*: I oppose it from the very start.

6. *Gregarach*: the Gaelic word for a member, and for the chief, of the Clan MacGregor, which was proscribed, rendered nameless, at the end of the seventeenth century; some editions of *Weir* have the variant 'Grigalach'. The action of the novel is set, for the most part, during the early-to-middle years of the second decade of the nineteenth century, and Frank Innes's words allude to a song written by Walter Scott for *Albyn's Anthology* (1816). 'MacGregor's Gathering' begins:

> The moon's on the lake, and the mist's on the brae,
> And the Clan has a name that is nameless by day.

After an outburst of halooing, the song makes this further reference to the MacGregors' outlawed condition: 'We're landless, landless, landless, Grigalach!' Innes's words could also be thought to allude to the language of Scott's conspiratorial romance, *Rob Roy* (1817). Robert Louis Stevenson's writings and *Rob Roy*, with its generic weak-strong hero, a visiting Englishman, are intimately related. Incognito, and in Gaelic, the bandit chief speaks of himself in the novel (chapter 21) as Gregarach. Scott's Introduction tells the 'remarkable Highland story' of the murder of Campbell of Glenure – a story retold in Stevenson's *Kidnapped*, where Rob Roy's son Robin enters into a bagpipe contest with Alan Breck Stewart. According to Scott's account, Alan Breck was widely thought to have been the 'actual homicide', Campbell's killer, and another of Rob Roy's sons attempted to kidnap him. Andrew Lang told in 1889 of an American boy who said of *Rob Roy* that it was 'not bad, and rather like Stevenson'.

CHAPTER VIII: A NOCTURNAL VISIT

1. *cannie hour at e'en*: 'cannie' means cautious or crafty, and the expression comes from Burns's song 'Green grow the rashes', with its contempt for the world, and its wonderful 'tapsalteerie' – meaning head over heels, or, as the elder Kirstie puts it elsewhere in the novel, 'heels ower hurdie':

> But gie me a canny hour at e'en,
> My arms about my dearie O;
> An' warly cares, an' warly men,
> May a' gae tapsalteerie O!

CHAPTER IX: AT THE WEAVER'S STONE

1. *brute nature*: according to notes made by Stevenson's amanuensis of the time, Belle Strong, Fanny's daughter by her first marriage, he had planned an ending which would unite Archie and Kirstie and send them to America, and there are certainly bound to be readers for whom it is a relief that such a plan did not come into effect, and that *Weir* does not proceed to the climax of an adventurous escape. In his Editorial Note to the novel (1896) Sidney Colvin explains in some detail (and with misplaced reference to young Kirstie's 'wounded vanity') what Belle Strong's notes suggest was due to happen – which may not, of course, have been what would have happened, given what we know of the experience of composition, of its discoveries and surprises:

> Archie persists in his good resolution of avoiding further conduct compromising to young Kirstie's good name. Taking advantage of the situation thus created, and of the girl's unhappiness and wounded vanity, Frank Innes pursues his purpose of seduction; and Kirstie, though still caring for Archie in her heart, allows herself to become Frank's victim. Old Kirstie is the first to perceive something amiss with her, and believing Archie to be the culprit, accuses him, thus making him aware for the first time that mischief has happened. He does not at once deny the charge, but seeks out and questions young Kirstie, who confesses the truth to him; and he, still loving her, promises to protect and defend her in her trouble. He then has an interview with Frank Innes on the moor, which ends in a quarrel, and in Archie killing Frank beside the Weaver's Stone. Meanwhile the Four Black Brothers, having become aware of their sister's betrayal, are bent on vengeance against Archie as her supposed seducer. They are about to close in upon him with this purpose when he is arrested by the officers of the law for the murder of Frank. He is tried before his own father, the Lord Justice-Clerk, found guilty, and condemned to death. Meanwhile the elder Kirstie, having discovered from the girl how matters really stand, informs her nephews of the truth; and they, in a great revulsion of feeling in Archie's favour, determine on an action after the ancient manner of their house. They gather a following, and after a great fight break the prison where Archie lies confined, and rescue him. He and young Kirstie thereafter escape to America. But the ordeal of taking part in the trial of his own son has been too much for the Lord Justice-Clerk, who dies of the shock.

This is not, in fact, the only plan which has been attributed to the writer. In the *Times Literary Supplement* of 4 December 1919 the Rev. S. R. Lysaght described a visit he paid to Stevenson at Vailima in the South Seas on Easter

Sunday, 1894. Stevenson's eyes 'flashed with emotion' as he spoke of the ending of *Weir* – as if he had already written it. 'The strongest scene in the book, he said – the strongest scene he had ever conceived or would ever write – was one in which the younger Kirstie came to her lover when he was in prison and confessed to him that she was with child by the man he had murdered.' Lysaght added: 'I cannot think that he had abandoned this climax.'

The continuation of the present scene which is contained in the manuscript material of 1892 starts, without a paragraph break, the words 'brute nature'. The passage in question, with its reference to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book Eight, lines 55, 56, is as follows:

It is a gate through which all boys must pass, and they carry the marks of the Jack-in-the-Box surprise until the day of their death. Perhaps the girls have a similar unforgettable experience the first time that fate throws them on the warm breast and fluent tongue of the schoolmaster aforesaid! It is to be said to Archie's credit that not even the dire astonishment at Kirstie's behaviour daunted him on the path of duty. As soon as she was so far recuperated by caresses, by finding herself again in the arms of her lover, he returned to the charge.

'Kirstie,' he said, 'God knows, I didn't mean to wound you, and I must say this that I have come to say. Will you listen, my darling? Will you let me say it to an end, and not be angry again with your poor lover?'

'Yes, Mr Airchie,' she answered still quaking with her sobs.

'Airchie!' cried he.

And she submitting answered, 'Airchie.'

'Dear,' said he.

And she added, 'Dear!'

They exchanged kisses and a horrible weakness came over him. 'Kirstie,' he began, and paused to kiss her again, so irresistible she looked in her brief consoled grief, and she drew and held him close to her gluttonously, reassuring herself, proving to herself that the horrible schoolmaster was gone, that her own Archie was come back again, and smiling on her.

The schoolmaster was there still, if she had only known it, a good deal dishevelled and perturbed, his head half turned, but yet repeating to himself where his duty lay. But he made a compromise, which if he had made it at the first, could have strongly simplified his task. He drew her to the gravestone, set her down close to him, put his arm about her, and proceeded to follow the advice of that great artist, who was a representative of the universal schoolmaster himself and believed in that ideal implicitly; like Adam he 'solved his high disputes with conjugal caresses.' Keeping a comfortable arm about her, cherishing her physically the while he blew cold upon her with his words.

'Kirstie,' he began again, 'we must know where we stand. Would you like me to write to my father?'

Weary distaste of the subject, not any fear of the consequences, dictated her answer. 'O, no, dinnae write to him!' she murmured. 'Let us be.'

'You would rather I waited till he came?' he pursued.

'O, ay, far raither,' she said, and she put up her hand and drew it down the lapel of his coat with a slow dragging caress, like an affectionate cat's. It was customary to her, intoxication to him.

His voice broke. 'I am afraid you cannot be serious!' he said, and laughed softly in spite of himself, so sweet was the demonstration to his heart, however much at such a moment his mind might disapprove of it.

'O, no, I can be serious too. I *am* serious,' she said, and she laid her face timidly against his breast and lifted her eyes in a beatitude.

Archie struggled hard with the intoxicating influence, he breathed hard. He was holding to sobriety with both hands.

'I am to wait then?' he said.

'O, say to wait,' she answered, and her voice was like a somnambulist's.

'Well, then, my dearest, my own dearest, my own sweet maid,' he said, 'I must tell you what I have decided for both our good – decided it in my love, in most pious ardent love for my own Kirstie. Until my father hears of this –'

'O, why, should he ever hear? Why should we fash him wi' trifles? We were getting on fine without him, dear,' interrupted the girl.

'Why?' exclaimed the startled Archie. 'Good God, why do you suppose?'

GLOSSARY

ae one
apologue allegory, moral tale
Auld Hornie the Devil

bailie town councillor
ballant ballad
bauchles old shoes
besom a broom, and a word for a mischievous or mettlesome woman
birling whirling
blagyard blackguard
blendit this has been taken to mean, in the present context, windswept, but could be thought to mean blended, or blinded, or both
bonnet-laird a man who farms his own land
buirdly strapping, handsome

ca' drive, call
caller fresh, cold
cantie cheerful
carline old woman
caulf calf
chalmer chamber
claes clothes
clamjamfry clutter, crowd
clavers silly talk
cock-laird yeoman
collieshangie tumult
collogue chat confidentially
condescend state a case, particularize
corp corpse
crack talk
craw crow
cuddy donkey
cuist cast
cutty short; a brattish girl

daffing cavorting
damnifeed damaged, spoilt
dander saunter
daur dare
deave deafen, bore
deil devil
dentie dainty
derivative in certain scientific contexts the word has meant agent
dirdum strength
disjaskit worn-out, forlorn
dozened stupefied
drumlie gloomy
dule-tree hanging-tree; 'dule' can mean sorrow, or a boundary
dunting knocking, bashing
dwaibly weak, ailing

e'en evening
ettercap vixen

feck quantity
fell strong, keen, grave, strange
fey strange, shadowed by an impending doom or disaster
fit foot
flit leave
flype turn up, or inside out
forbye besides
fushionless insipid, pithless
fyle soil

gey and ill pretty ill
glaur mud
gloaming dusk
gowsty gusty
grat wept
grieve steward, factor
guddle catch fish by hand
gude, guid good, or God
gurly stormy, surly
gyte mad

haddit held
herd shepherd
hinney honey
hirstle hustle, harass
hizzy hussy
howf a haunt or shelter
hunker crouch
hunks miser
hurdie bum
hypothec the whole show; in Scots law, a creditor's right in relation to a debtor's effects

idleset idleness
ill difficult, wicked

jaconet a cotton fabric
jaiket jacket
jaud jade
jeely-piece jam or jelly sandwich
jo sweetheart
justified the word can mean executed and can also mean the opposite – saved in the theological sense
jyle jail

kebbuck cheese
kenspeckle noted, conspicuous
kilted tucked up
kye cows
kyte belly

laigh low
lave of them the rest of them
lee tell a lie, fib
lift sky
lightly treat lightly
linking skipping, tripping
lown lonely, calm
lynn waterfall

macer court officer
maun must
menseful decent, respectable, well-mannered
merrit married
mirk dark
misbegowk disappointment, deception
mools earth
muckle much, big

nowt cattle

or ere, before

owercome refrain

paddle beat, spank
palmer wander about, walk awkwardly
panel defendant in a criminal action
play buff on make a fool of
plew-stilts plough handles
plies folds
puggy a monkey, a drunk

quean wench

rig and furrow ridge and furrow, the corduroy effect of a ploughed field
risping rasping, grinding
rout roar, strike
routh plenty
rudas haggard
runt an undersized person or animal, a hostile term for an old man or woman

sab sob
sarsenet a soft silk
sclamber clamber
sculduddery dirty talk
shauchling shambling, shuffling
siller money
sinsyne since then
skail disperse
skirl shriek, or make a shrill sound
skreigh o' day daybreak
snash abuse
sneisty impudent, sneering
sooth hum, sing low
sorrow a Duncan Jopp not a Duncan Jopp
speir ask
speldering sprawling
splairge splash about, behave irresponsibly
starling protective outwork of a bridge
steik shut
stirk bullock
stockfish dried fish
sugar-bool sugar plum
swalled swollen

tawpie a giddy or slovenly girl
thrawn twisted, stubborn, cross
toon town
to-names nicknames, other names; also spelt 'tee-names' and, in some editions of *Weir*, 'two-names'
triced hauled or hoisted
tyke dog

unchancy unlucky
unco strange, extremely
upsetting forward, aspiring
upsitten insolent, indifferent

vivers victuals

warly worldly
waur worse
wear waste
weet wet
weird a fate, a curse
whammle upset
whaup curlew
whunstane whinstane
win back make it back
windlestrae stalk of grass

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